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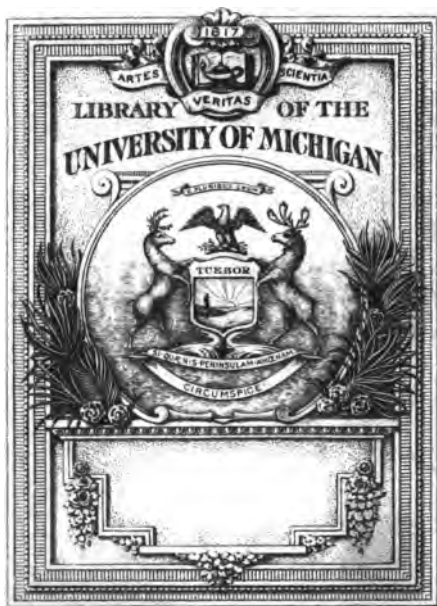
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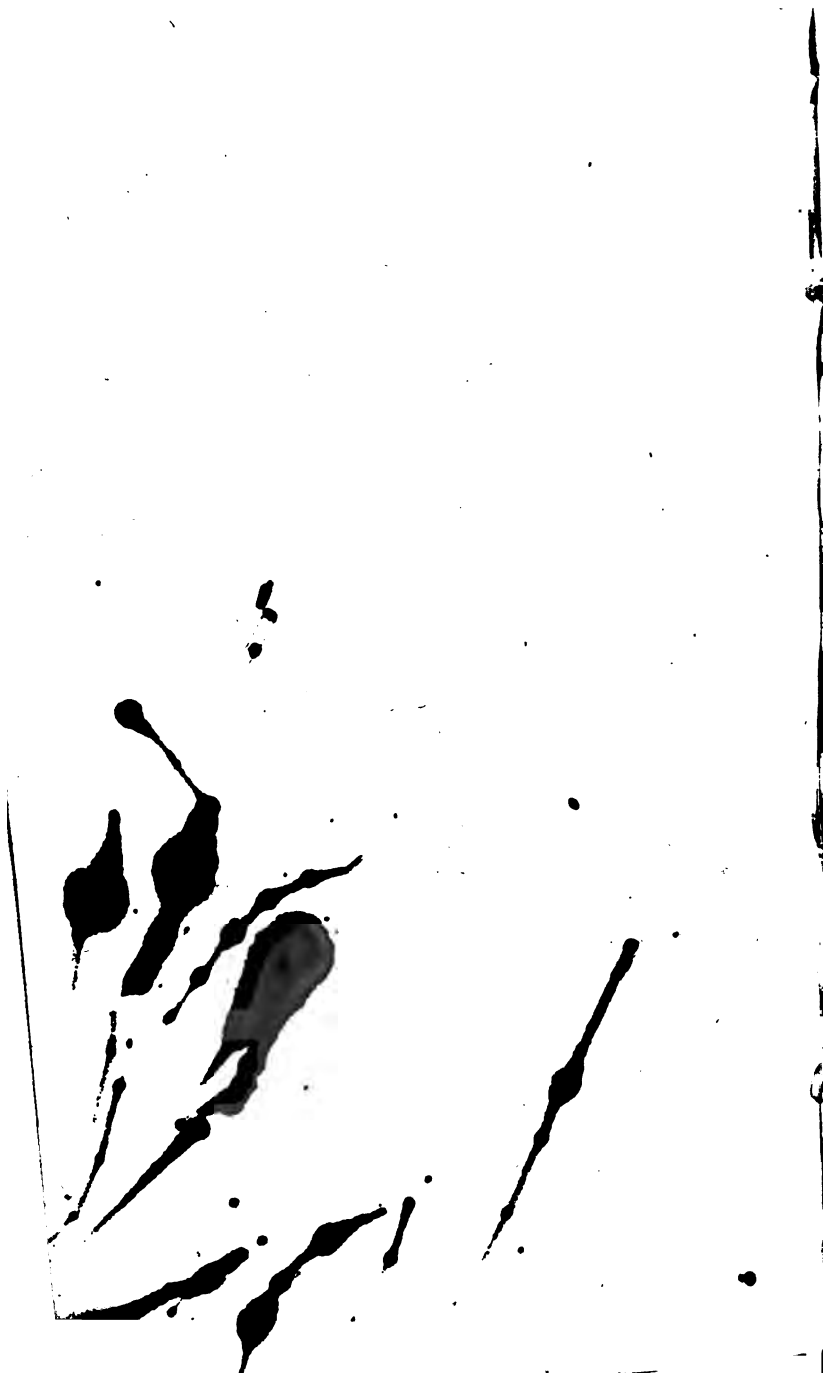
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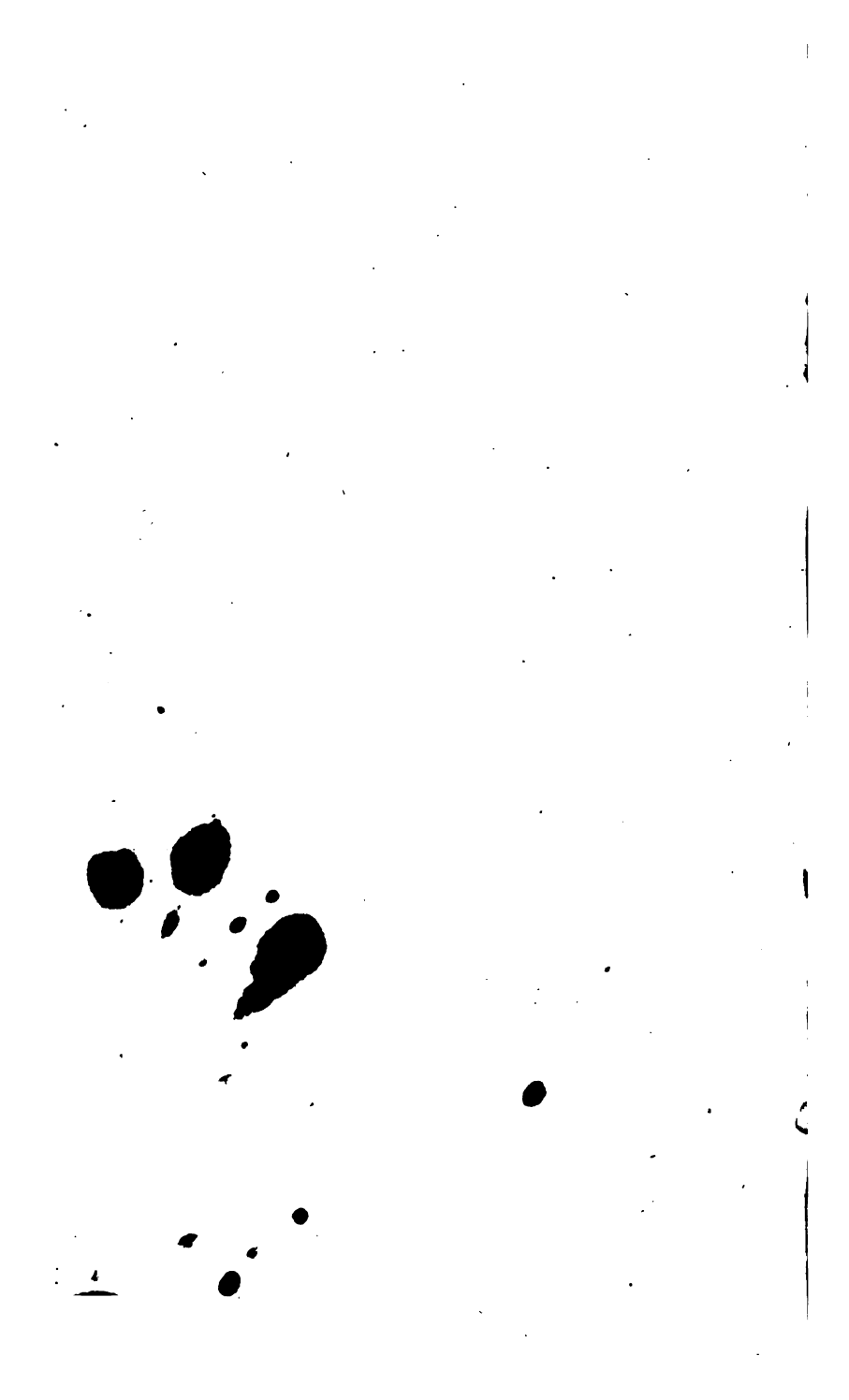


THE GIFT OF
Robert B. Brown

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THE HEIRESS.

VOL. I.

Ma quando io avrò durata l'eroica fatica di trascrivere questa storia da questo dilavato e graffiato autografo, e l'avrò data, come suol dirsi, alla luce, si troverà egli poi chi duri fatica di leggerla ?—MANZONI.

My task is done, my song hath ceased, my theme
Has died into an echo ; it is fit
The spell should break of this protracted dream.
The torch shall be extinguish'd which hath lit
The midnight lamp ; and what is writ is writ—
Would it were worthier ! But I am not now
That which I have been ; and my visions flit
Less palpably before me ; and the glow
Which in my spirit dwelt, is fluttering, faint and low.

BYRON.

Pickering, Ellen

THE HEIRESS;

A NOVEL.

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes."—*Byron*.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

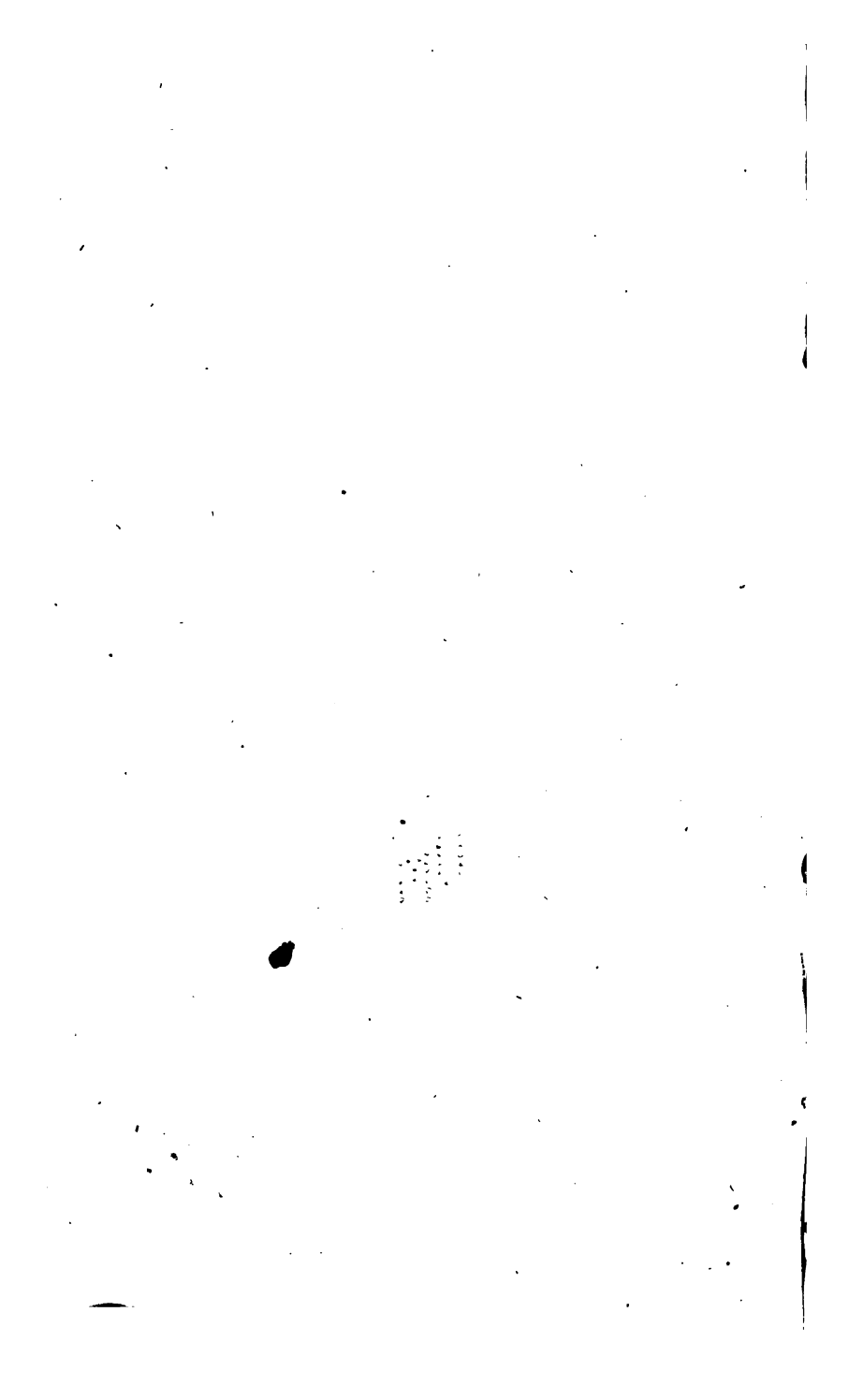
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THE HEIRESS.

CHAPTER I.

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light,
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every auburn tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent—
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart where all is innocent!

BYRON.

It was towards the end of May; not sufficiently warm to occasion a dislike to motion; not one of those still and noiseless evenings, whose almost death-like silence fills the mind with a feeling resembling awe, if not awe itself; when the heart, ashamed of its own emotion amid such an unearthly calm, yields to the dreamy softness of the scene—or, wretched and repining itself, quarrels with the rebuking calm, and

“To stillness gives
The cold, harsh names of brutal apathy.”

No!—it was an evening the very reverse of such an one. It was, like life, all change—half hope—half fear—mingling

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and mixing, till it would have been difficult to tell which had the mastery. It seemed formed to delight :

“Who would not view
The green earth always green,
Or the blue sky always blue ?”

True it was an azure sky ; but then there were clouds of fantastic shape, careering o’er its sea of blue, and changing the shadows and the shades of all beneath. It was warm, but then there was a light fresh breeze playing around, and rustling the bright green leaves. The bustle of the day was over, but the birds were not yet weary of singing ; the labourer whistled as he sought his humble but happy home ; the mother sat at her cottage door, singing to the crowing baby in her lap ; and the merry children laughed and shouted as they joined in the animated game of cricket, or chased each other across the common.

Perhaps I should coax few to agree with me, were I to say I consider this scene of childish merriment to be in strict accordance with the shifting shade and sunshine on the surrounding woods and fields ; and yet to my mind such is the fact. I dote on children, but I never see them playing, that the thought of their future trials and sorrows does not cause the sigh to mingle with the smile, and shadow the brightness of that which is, by anticipating the gloom of what may be. I might, were I so inclined, appeal to the frowns and sullen looks of more than one urchin, as proofs that even the dawn of life is not without its storms, and that the infant of seven may, comparatively speaking, suffer as much from wounded pride and disappointed ambition as the elder of seventy :—but I am not so inclined.

The hours of childhood are, perhaps, the brightest portions of our existence, and in most minds the season of purer thoughts and more generous feelings than our after-lives exhibit. Jack may frown, and Jane may look sullen ; the one may cry to lose his top, the other to break her doll ; but the frown, and the sullen look, and the grief for the lost plaything, will pass away, and be seen no more ; even as yon tiny dark cloud, gliding across the azure sky, will disappear in the west, “and leave not a shadow behind.” Alas ! alas ! it is not so in after-life ; and it is this that makes the chief difference between the sorrows of childhood and the sorrows of manhood ; the sorrows of the child are fleeting, the grief of a moment !—the sorrows of the man are lasting, the grief

of years ! The storm of an hour, though furious, may be forgotten, and its trace effaced ; for the storm of years there is no Lethe ! it is the constant dripping that wears the stone ; it is the last feather that breaks the camel's back.

But why pursue the subject ? We shall meet with enough of sorrow in our way through life, without stepping out of our path to seek it. If men and children *look* happy, let us believe them to be so ; and if we know them to be not happy, then let us think :

“ Earth has its pangs for all ; its happiest breast,
Not his who meets them least, but bears them best.”

For my part, I mean to write as merry a book as my own rather gloomy temperament and the fashion of the times will allow ; that is, like the evening I have tried to describe, a tale made up

“ Of hopes and fears, and gloom and shine.”

What can have happened ? There is neither a shout nor a laugh to be heard. The labourer has ceased to whistle in the middle of a bar ; the mother forgets to play with her infant, and heeds not its wailing cry ; the curs bark unhidden ; the ball, discharged by a careless hand, bowls down the middle wicket, unchecked and unmarked by the staring batter. What can be the matter ? and why do men, women, and children, ay, even cats and dogs, look towards that dusty road ? “ Sister Anne, sister Anne, what do you see coming ?”

“ An open landaulet and four, with two ladies inside, a man and a maid in the rumble-tumble, and a beautiful black and white setter behind.” “ Who are the ladies, and what are they like ?” “ Time will show.”

The carriage approached ; bats and balls were flung down, and all sought to gain a distinct view of the travellers. Two of the boys, encouraged by the smiles of one of the ladies, and the good-natured looks of the servant, clung to the carriage behind ; whilst another parted with a portion of his supper to make friends with the handsome setter. Every hat was off ; bows and curtsies, for in this secluded village such things still were, became universal, save in one or two instances, where an excess of curiosity occasioned a forgetfulness of manners. The homage was at first silent ; a murmur was heard, and then arose a long, loud, deafening shout.

A gate at the end of the common delayed the progress of the carriage for a few moments, and before it could proceed

again, men were at the horses' heads, and it was surrounded by most of the inhabitants of the village of Hurlstone. The welcomes were loud and fervent. "Long life and happiness to our dear young lady!" sounded from every tongue; all crowded to catch a glimpse; all strove to win a word. Their young lady, evidently unprepared for the recognition, leant back for a moment to subdue her feelings; and, having succeeded in some slight degree, proceeded to acknowledge the courtesies of the crowd, and answer their eager inquiries and congratulations. The tears stood in her dark blue eyes, and struggled with the smile on her bright lips, as she bent forward to speak to the villagers. They listened to her tremulous but sincere thanks in perfect silence, answered by another shout, and then intimated their intention of releasing the horses, and drawing the carriage themselves to the house. The idea distressed her, and, repressing her emotion, she spoke firmly but kindly to those around her.

"I thank you most warmly for your good wishes and kind intention, but you will, I am sure, allow me to proceed quietly and unattended at my earnest request. I left Hurlstone blessed with parents—I return an orphan; rejoicing and congratulation, therefore, ill suit the first day of my arrival. Though I decline your attendance at present, I am not the less grateful for your friendly purpose, and hope to be always welcomed home with equal warmth; and to prove I have not forgotten the precepts and examples of those we have lost. And now good evening, and a happy morrow to all."

The people saw the tears in her eyes; felt for her sorrow, and respected her wishes. The hands were taken from the horses' reins; respectful good evenings were uttered by all, and the carriage again proceeded on its way, each one among the crowd feeling convinced that the young lady's words, and bow, and smile, were directed particularly to himself. As the carriage arrived at a turn in the road that would hide it from their sight, three cheers were given for their young lady, and then the confusion of tongues recommenced.

Some thought her thinner, some thought her paler; each one had something to say and to think, but all agreed she was a perfect beauty, and nothing less than an angel. The confusion of Babel could but have slightly exceeded the confusion of Hurlstone, as all claimed the honour of having first recognised the Heiress; but the causes of the confusion were widely different. The former was the murmur of sinful men, who had rebelled against a just but merciful Creator: the

latter was the gratitude of kind, though humble hearts, towards one who, absent or present, still had them in her thoughts, and held her riches as a precious deposit for the good of others.

Meanwhile, the carriage passed on, and the elder lady tried to rouse her companion, who, with tearful eyes bent on the surrounding woods, was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to heed the remarks of her friend.

"Helen," she said at length, placing her hand on her niece's arm, and thus forcing attention, "is this keeping your promise to your parents? And where is the pleasure with which you talked of revisiting your home?"

Helen started, was silent for a moment, and then spoke, though without turning round.

"Forgive me, dear aunt, the promise shall be kept; but I overrated my firmness when I talked of seeing Hurlestone with pleasure. These words have roused feelings of anguish and regret, which I had vainly hoped were laid at rest for ever. Give me my way for the next two hours, and then I hope you will complain of me no more. If you will excuse my playing hostess for the present, and proceed to the house alone, where all is ready for your reception, I will walk through the woods, and join you in time to preside at the tea-table. Nay, no remonstrance, dear aunt; it must be so for this once."

The carriage was stopped; Helen had descended, and, smiling through her tears, kissed her hand as she disappeared among the trees, ere Mrs. Hargrave could oppose her wish. Her faithful ally and petted favourite, the setter, was as delighted as his young mistress at her leaving the carriage, and wooed and won her caresses as he bounded round her.

The woods through which she passed were beautiful. The interweaving branches formed a bright and leafy canopy above her head, and the rich moss and lovely flowers furnished a soft and luxurious carpet for her tread: occasional breaks showed her glimpses of a placid lake, and verdant slopes, and mossy dells, with detached clumps of stately trees of every variety, beneath whose shade groups of deer calmly reclined, whilst the sportive fawns frolicked around in grace and confidence. All was dressed in summer's livery; bright, but not gaudy; and not a faded leaf, or withered branch, whispered of chill or change. There was no sublimity in the scene, no towering rocks, no fearful precipice, no barren shore, or stormy wave; but there was rich and peaceful beauty. It was a scene to be loved still more than admired.

A Byron might have said it was tame ; a Scott would have felt it was his home ; the home of high and generous feelings, and the best and holiest affections of the heart. But beautiful as it was, though Helen gazed on its beauties, it was evident her heart, rather than her eyes, was engaged in the survey. The falling tear and the gentle sigh told that she viewed all as connected with some melancholy remembrances ; and that the past, and not the present, occupied her thoughts.

The village clock striking seven roused her from her reverie, and she stopped no more till she entered the humble church-yard. Here she paused for a few moments, then approached, and looked through one of its gothic windows. The one through which she gazed, overlooked a large square pew, whose well-conditioned green lining, soft hassocks, and splendidly-bound prayer books, bespoke it the possession of the great family of the village. Every thing in the pew looked comfortable and well arranged, as though it had been occupied the last Sunday ; and the sun glancing through an opposite window, gave it a bright and cheerful look. And yet the sight was a shock to the fair and delicate being whose looks were bent upon it.

At first she shuddered, and veiled her eyes with her slight hands, whilst the tears fell fast through her long slender fingers, as she leant against a buttress for support. But this mood soon passed away. The hands were withdrawn, and she looked again. She thought of her promise to those who were gone. She thought of their happiness, of the sinfulness of wishing to recall them to a world of pain and suffering. She thought of the equal guilt of shrinking from her appointed trials, and deeming herself unchastened fit for heaven. She thought of all this, and her sighs were hushed, and her tears fell no longer. Her thoughts were turned from earth to heaven, and her eyes took the same direction :

“ The tears
Still linger'd in her eyes of deepest blue,
As dew-drops on the hyacinth's azure bell ;
Whilst the soft pink that flush'd her cheek, so rich,
And yet so delicate, was like the dawn
Of early morn, when mist withdraws her veil.”

There was a something so pure, so spiritual, about her at that moment, that an enthusiast might have thought her an inhabitant “ of upper air.”

Her four-footed favourite, not having the power to indulge in her high thoughts, became impatient of delay, and, looking

up in her face, whined imploringly. It was a bright and beautiful chain he had broken, but she patted and soothed him, looked once more into that humble church-yard, and then turned away.

"What, Bran, are you impatient for your supper, or affronted at my want of attention? Both! Well then, one walk round the church-yard, one look at Hurlestone greathouse, as the villagers call it, 'and then to supper with what appetite you may.'"

She reached her favourite corner as she spoke, and became so absorbed in her own reflections, that the motions of the dog were unnoticed, till a loud bark startled her.

"What is the matter, Bran? Cannot you wait a few moments?"

Still the barking continued. The noise was not in accordance with her thoughts or the place, and she spoke in a more commanding tone, as he continued to bark and bay round a large square tombstone.

"Be quiet, Bran, be quiet, Bran! Bran, come here."

To her surprise, her usually obedient favourite actually rebelled, and paid no attention to her commands. Annoyed at the disturbance, she walked towards the tomb, still speaking to her dog.

"Bran, my own pet, why don't you come when I call you? What are you teasing? Some half-starved cat, or miserable hedge-hog?"

At this moment rose to her view a pair of lustrous dark eyes fixed full upon her, surmounted by a profusion of curling black hair. Bushy whiskers and mustachios almost concealing a mouth, the mischievous curve of whose lips spoke full enjoyment of her dismay, completed the portrait of this alarming spy. For some moments she stood looking at him, too much surprised to move; but as the head, rising above the tomb, showed that it belonged "to a proper man and tall," blushing deeply at the awkwardness of her situation, she turned abruptly away, passed round an angle of the old building, sprang lightly over the stile, and disappeared among the trees ere the stranger seemed fully aware she had passed from his sight. A call, in a clear sweet voice, brought her dog to her side, whose barking "vexed no more the calm of silent eve."

Helen had not gone far, ere a rustling behind showed she was followed; and, having seen no one else, she concluded her pursuer was the owner of that pair of lustrous and imper-

minent eyes. Vexed and annoyed at having had an observer of her emotion, and in no humour to play guide to the stranger, and such she concluded was his purpose in following her, she availed herself of a turn in the path to glide behind the trunks of two stately trees,

“That twin-like grew of equal size and shape,”

and persuaded Bran to crouch quietly by her side. In a few minutes she had the pleasure of seeing the stranger pass her retreat, and pursue his way nothing doubting. The next moment she turned into an opposite path, and soon after came in sight of the home of her childhood. As she ascended a rising ground, a horseman appeared in sight just leaving the house, and riding towards her apparently more intent on speed than safety. Her first feeling was vexation, thinking it the stranger, though that could scarcely have been; but a second glance told her it was one well-known and rarely unwelcome. On he came, his slight blood-horse hardly appearing to touch the ground, so light and winged its motion, whilst the carelessness with which he held the bridle, and the eagerness with which he bent forward, till his forehead almost touched his horse's mane, spoke the eagerness and impetuosity of the rider. Nothing impeded his course. An iron fence was cleared without an effort, or a break in his speed; a deep and broad ha-ha proved as slight a barrier; and, ere Helen had time to tremble for his safety, he had flung his bridle loose, thrown himself from the saddle, and was standing before her with his eyes fixed on her face, and both her hands clasped in his.

A duller eye than his might have seen the traces of tears, and the sight called a cloud to his brow, though her smile of welcome, and her “I am glad to see you, dear Robert,” might have banished the cloud from any brow but his. No reception could be more cordial or sincere, and yet there was a something in it that did not please him. Perhaps it was too cordial, too frank; or he was vexed that her ramble had delayed their meeting, though but for a few moments; or he was out of humour with himself, and inclined to lay the blame upon another—no very unusual proceeding with him, or others. To blame her openly for the delay, he was aware, notwithstanding his usual impetuosity, would be a fatal departure from prudence, certain of reproof; but he might blame her for indulging in melancholy thoughts to the destruction of her peace and health: that was another matter, and such

solicitude could only arise from the friendly regard of a cousin.

"Helen," he said, "I was distressed to hear from Mrs. Hargrave that your good resolutions were all forgotten, and that in spite of her wishes you had left her to indulge unrestrained in sorrowful remembrances; I had missed"—

"Nay! nay! Robert," interrupting him half-playfully half seriously, and withdrawing her hands from his grasp, "if you chide thus at your first visit, Watson shall say 'not at home' at your second. You may find yourself able to keep your good resolutions; I have not always the power. The kind welcome of the villagers recalled the past; but, I hope, I have returned from my lonely ramble better and happier, and if I have wept, surely on such a day as this, when a return to a solitary home! must unavoidably awaken sorrowful thoughts, I should have been met with the kind soothings of a friend, not the chiding of a censor. Shall I retaliate, and blame you for being here when you ought to have been installed as an *attaché* at Vienna, according to your purpose when we parted some time since at Hastings?"

Robert was confused as he met her grave look, conscious he should greatly prefer turning an *attaché* at Hurlestone, and tried to stammer forth something in explanation or vindication; of which the only intelligible words were "intricate diplomacy, detestable policy, and ministerial intrigues." There was a silence of some moments, painful to both, since each saw the sentiments of the other must prove a source of future pain and anxiety; but it was broken by Helen's frankly extending her hand, saying as she did so, "We must not quarrel on such a day as this, but you must ever be to me as you have promised, a kind and gentle brother; so we will have no more disquisitions on good resolutions, but 'Fool it to our humour's bent.'"

Though inclined to quarrel with the emphasis laid on the word *brother*, he found it impossible to resist her sweet smile and sweeter tone, and the extended hand was received as warmly as it was given. Conversing on indifferent matters they soon reached the house, and long ere tea was concluded, the frown had passed away from Robert Euston's brow, and he felt that his cousin's smile could make him forget every thing but his love.

Anxious to avoid all recurrence to the past, Helen asked him if their neighbours, the Marstons, were come down, and what changes had taken place among the inhabitants lately.

"I have half a mind to mislead you, that I may laugh at your mistakes; you always look so distressed when you have asked a *mal-apropos* question!"

"Instead of doing that," said Mrs. Hargrave, "give me a correct sketch of our neighbours, as they are all strangers to me."

"Pray do not ask him, aunt, for he is the most satirical gossip that ever abused elderly single ladies, or frightened sentimental young ones, or would-be blues."

"No scandal of Queen Elizabeth, an' you please, Miss St. Maur! Do not believe her, Mrs. Hargrave. The truth is, my gentle cousin Helen, despite her demure looks, winning tones, and dove-like eyes, sees, hears, and observes every thing; and she only wishes to silence me, that she may furnish you with some of her own graphic sketches. I do not dispute her talents in that line, but as I have taken the field first, she must yield me precedence."

"I have not the slightest wish, I assure you, to dispute precedence; but, before you begin, allow me to warn my aunt, that the ink you employ is the juice of the lemon; that your burin is too rarely blunted by good qualities in others, or too much charity in yourself."

"You are severe, Helen," biting his lips, and inwardly owning the truth of her remark. "What are we to do, if we may not laugh at the follies of our neighbours?"

"Praise their virtues, and throw a pitying veil over their foibles."

"Pick wheat out of chaff, and throw your Chantilly veil over the Atlantic!"

Helen smiled, but shook her head.

"If you will assert, *ma belle cousine*, with unblushing cheek and unflinching tongue, that you have no taste for the ridiculous, I will never again sketch maid, wife, or widow."

"Boy, bachelor, or dotard?" asked she archly.

"Ha! thou most gentle of reprovers! I suspect half of our quarrel is because I ridicule certain favourites of yours, and that it is but a thing of party after all."

"If you can really assert it to be so, when you recollect the many beardless youths, and bearded senators, old young ladies, and young old ladies, over whom I have thrown my protecting shield, I will allow the truth of your position; and own I did you wrong, when I imagined that, like the barbarians of old, you carried on an exterminating warfare, sparing neither age, sex, or condition."

"I will assert nothing till you have answered my question. Does any thing that approaches the verge of the ridiculous escape your observation, from the high-flown lengthiness of a maiden speech, to the ultra-exclusiveness of a *nouvelle parvenue*? No turning away; a question I have asked, and an answer I will have."

"I fear I must, in candour, plead guilty to the charge, though rather broadly stated; but I do not own the pleasure of companionship in wrong, and have yet to learn how the proving the guilt of a second person lessens the crime of the first. Moreover, I own my error, and regret it, whilst you glory in your guilt; then even you must acknowledge, that, however strong my perception of the ridiculous, I have an equally strong perception of the good and great."

"Oh, certainly! no one can deny that you combine the good sense and clear observation of Brenda, with the high-souled grandeur of Minna."

"Thanks for your ironical compliment," said the laughing Helen; "methinks I would change cousins to resemble either. After such a speech I must own myself vanquished, and quit the field,

'So now cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war!'

—for as for staying the rush of your satire, if your will be set upon it, I might as well attempt to still the Niagara. I shall study 'Detraction Displayed' in this quiet corner."

"Victory! victory! The day is mine! But do not run away, you may as well study 'Detraction Displayed' from spoken words as from printed ones; and if you will remain I will be as merciful as my nature will admit."

"Then I am to sit quietly by, hear all ridiculed, and defend none?"

"Just so; and now *commençons*. No interruption, if you please, but you may say what you like at the close of my sketches." Then turning to Mrs. Hargrave, "Where shall I begin, Kings, Lords, or Commons?"

"Oh, give rank its due precedence, by all means."

"So it shall be then; and now for the Marston family."

"And Murder bared her arm, and rampart War
Yok'd the red dragons to her iron car;"

repeated Helen, looking archly at her cousin.

"Agreed, fair Helen; you have broken the bond of our agreement by this interruption, and I no longer promise to be

merciful ; not one of your favorites shall be spared, despite that imploring look. First, I shall present you with a full-length portrait of the noble head of the house, Henry James George Edward Beauchamp Alfred, Earl of Marston, of Marston Hall, in the county of —, Viscount Alfred, Baron Beauchamp of the kingdom of Ireland, one of the members of his Majesty's most honourable Privy Council, Custos Rotulorum of the aforesaid county, &c. &c. &c. I hope I have not wearied you with this enumeration of half his titles ; but I entertain too high a respect for him and his dignities to think of offending him by omitting any of his distinctions unnecessarily. He is descended, on both sides, from tolerably ancient families, that is, his father and mother can both prove they had grandfathers ; vide Debrett's Peerage, p. 9973 ; though the present Earl's parent was the first of the name ennobled. Whether Mr. Alfred's control of three boroughs, and the wisdom of the votes of himself and nominees, had any thing to do with his elevation, or whether he won the honour by his talents, we will leave for the decision of politicians, suffice it, that the first Lady Marston had not recovered from her almost incredulous surprise on finding herself a Countess ere his present Lordship was born ; born too, in a doubtful time, just as the last stroke that proclaimed the hour of midnight reverberated through the ancient hall, as the novelists would say, so that whether night or day had the honour of his birth, is still a disputed point. Whether this doubtful moment of his birth had really, as some think, any influence in forming his character ; or whether he owes the being a man of doubts to a large proportion of the organ of cautiousness ; or a descent on the maternal side from the renowned Wouter Van Twiller, as others contend ; or from an early education in the diplomatic circles, I shall not pretend to determine, but I should think, and imagine, and conclude, that one and all of these causes must have combined to make him what he is. In person he is neither tall nor short, fat nor thin, fair nor dark, pale nor florid. His eyes are neither grey nor hazel, but have a greenish tinge something between the two ; his nose neither Grecian, Roman, nor *rétroussé*, but a mixture of all ; his hair neither black, red, nor light, but of a doubtful brown ; most neutrally straight, with a due horror of waving to the right or to the left. His friends arranged his marriage for him, or it might never have been concluded ; as it is said he was doubtful even as he walked up the centre aisle of St. George's. His darling plan is the balance of

power; that source of declamation and deceit from the time of Henry VIII. to that of George VI. and the cause of innumerable alliances, holy and unholy, offensive and defensive; yet so fearful is he of affording hints to others on this momentous subject, that it is the one on which he is most scrupulously silent. To make a long tale short, he is one who asserts nothing and doubts every thing, from the mammoth down to the ant. The powers that be, are, in his eyes, 'wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best.' Ask his opinion,—he is not aware, he has not thought on the subject, and it is one that requires the deepest consideration. Ask him to dinner, to the best of his belief he has no engagement, but something may occur to prevent his having the pleasure; if not he shall be most happy. Nay, it is said that on a stranger's once asking if he had not the honour of addressing the Earl of Marston, his Lordship looked dreadfully alarmed at such a downright question, and (not till after a great deal of stammering and hesitation) admitted that it was possible it might be so, but that he was not prepared to speak decidedly on the subject, or in the habit of being so closely questioned. With all this no one talks more of decision, and all in his house may be certain of having their due places assigned them, as to seat the hundredth cousin of a viscount below the hundredth cousin of a baron, would, in his eyes, be even a more horrifying event than the Autocrat of all the Russias taking a fancy to a province of the Turkish empire, or entertaining a particular affection for Portsmouth or Plymouth. All these, from his superior capacity of foreseeing great ends from little beginnings, would alike portend the downfall of the constitution in church and state, the triumph of popery, and the anarchy of Europe. On one point only is he decided,—plead a distinguished precedent for any act, however ridiculous, and notwithstanding his veneration for the aristocracy, he will scarcely allow the power of appeal to rest in the House of Lords; and for a commoner to dispute the point would be rank rebellion—quite a Wat Tyler affair. Now, having disposed of the father to Helen's satisfaction, we will pass on to the son, the young Viscount Alford. His personal appearance is well enough for the eldest son of an Earl, and his talents not despicable. What his father doubts he asserts; both what is and what is not. While his father imagines he determines. His horror of diplomacy and policy is so great, that he refused to try for honours, lest his talents being rendered more clear, he should have found himself forced to

comply with his father's wishes, and take a part in public affairs. Obligated to become a member for one of his Lordship's boroughs, his maiden speech was so perfectly undiplomatic, to use a favourite expression of the Earl's, sparing neither side, that with his parent's full permission, or rather at his recommendation, the next Gazette announced his acceptance of the Chiltern Hundreds. Nature made him generous, high-spirited, and honorable; a contempt for his father's indecision and meanness, and the base intrigues for wealth and power which have come to his knowledge, have rendered him somewhat cynical and satirical in his grave moods, wild even beyond the verge of levity in his gay ones. His talents are wasted in saying lively things and witty criticisms, and he is fast degenerating into a quizzer. Had he applied to his studies, and afterwards exerted his powers of mind for the good of his country, instead of the amusement of himself and triflers far beneath him, his name might have been honoured in the annals of his country, whilst a steady perseverance in the path of duty, and an honourable co-operation with whichever party in the state he might think most worthy, could not have more distressed his wavering sire than the daring truths and bitter sarcasms he now scruples not to utter against all. Acting thus he would have won respect and esteem for himself, and some portion of his own merit would have been reflected on his father, giving him that consideration which he cannot gain himself. As it is, all must regret that one so gifted should have associated early with characters meriting contempt, and that as an almost necessary consequence, he should now look upon mankind as divided into the cheating and the cheated; those to be laughed at, and those to be laughed with. Under other circumstances, he might have tried to become good and wise, as earnestly as he now tries to be gay and unthinking. He is a moral kaleidoscope, delighting the eye with its variety and brilliancy, but unsatisfying to the mind. How does Helen look, Mrs. Hargrave? for Alford is such a superlative favourite of hers, that I dare not even glance her way."

"She looks most triumphant, as she considers you an irresistible pleader against yourself, and hopes hereafter to see you become all that you have blamed Alford for not being," said his cousin.

Mr. Euston turned away to hide his displeasure; and before he could reply to a remark whose justice he felt, Mrs. Hargrave said pettishly, "I wish, Helen, you would not in-

terrump your cousin, but let him finish the account of our neighbours."

Helen made no reply, and the gentleman had the prudence to continue his descriptions without a reference to the rebuke.

"For fear of wearying you, I will dismiss the rest of this family in a more summary way. My next portrait shall be his lordship's daughter; one, who under other circumstances, might have been thought by some plain Miss Alford, but now stands both as the fashionable and handsome Lady Catherine Alford. You shall have Mr. Delton's description of her, as I wish to be impartial: 'She is stylish, clever, piquante, would go to the right if ordered to the left; expects flattery, yet half despises it; a warm but indiscreet friend; a bitter but imprudent enemy; and a cool and skilful player with dangerous weapons—the fabled tomb of Mahomet suspended between earth and heaven.' Her mother is almost all that woman should be, only deserving blame for marrying such a bore as his lordship, and for having had too delicate health to control her children.—From Marston Hall let us proceed to Woodbine Cottage, which you must picture to yourself a square bright red brick house, over which the fair and romantic, or to use her own expressions, 'the delicately nerved and exquisitely sensitive Susan Jones has endeavoured for the last nine months to solicit the tender tendrils of the fantastic woodbine to throw its shadow and its perfumed veil.' You must imagine this being of a higher sphere, fat, fair, and fussy, resting her glowing cheek upon her ungloved hand, and chiding her fidgetty mother, 'that gossip Mrs. Jones,' for teasing her for the key of the tea-chest, and thus disturbing the delicious reverie, awakened by the tender beaming of the star of eve and dewy mist of twilight. I am no extravagant limner, I assure you, though you look incredulous; but the dewy mist of twilight has long since passed away I see, and I am keeping you from your repose after your journey. Farewell!

'To each, to both, a fair good night,
And pleasing dreams, and slumbers light.'

"Stay, I charge you, at a lady's bidding. In another hour the moon will be up, and you are scarcely prudent enough to ride in the dark alone; or rather, rest here to night, and you shall ramble with me to-morrow through my native woods."

"A thousand thanks! Are you indeed so anxious for my safety, my own dear Helen, faulty as I am?" and he pressed her hand, whilst his looks said even more than his words."

"We may wish a brother to be perfect, and yet love him

as he is ; not for his faults, but despite them ;" and she withdrew her hand coldly, and then added gaily, " besides, some of my lands are held on your life, and my steward says I must begin to be thrifty."

" You are too kind ; but, I have an appointment, and must return."

" At least take my horse and groom ; Bayard is too wild for the dark."

" You give yourself too much trouble for one so hateful, Miss St. Maur. I ride on Bayard, and on no other, and require no attendance. Should an accident happen, my will is in your favour, and I have learnt no lessons of thrift."

" Good night ! since it must be so."

He snatched her hand as she turned away displeased, and the tear that stood in her eye calmed him instantly.

" Forgive me, Helen ! I have been vexed and irritated, and am not myself to-day. You shake your head ; well then, I will be myself no more, but you shall make me what you will. My own groom is here, and I will ride quietly, and come to-morrow and show you I am safe. Are you contented ?"

" More than contented. Once more good night, and remember you dine and sleep here to-morrow. I have a hundred things to consult you about, and a thousand to tell you, and will hope to have the happiness to see you all I could wish."

" Really, Helen," said Mrs. Hargrave, looking very stately, as soon as the door had closed on their visitor, " I cannot at all approve of your conduct towards Mr. Euston. You seem the only person blind to his virtues."

" You wrong my affection for him, dear aunt ; I am fully sensible of all his virtues, or I should not be so anxious lest he allow his faults to overpower them."

" In my time young ladies did not think it decorous to reprove young gentlemen for that for which their elders had allowed them to pass unproved : but old customs are changed now it seems. I saw no harm in what your cousin said of Lord Alford, or I should have checked him. And, had strangers been present, they might have attributed your remark to strange motives."

" Alford is too kind to be given up to Robert's jealousy. To defend myself from your open charges, dear aunt, would be useless, as I should still remain wrong in your eyes. Allow me therefore to plead guilty to the crime, of which, in your heart, you accuse me. My affection for my cousin is

the warm, open, sincere affection of a sister, and it never can, and, with my will, it never shall partake of another character. He understood me perfectly when we parted at Hastings: why his opinion and conduct have changed since then, perhaps you can tell, as he may have explained his reasons to you in his letter of last month, or his interview of this evening. I am perfectly innocent of such a change, and deeply regret it. No true friend will encourage hopes which can never be realized, but will join with me in persuading him to follow some profession. To urge him on this point was one of my principal reasons for asking him here to-morrow, as well as to show by my open conduct, that we could never be more than relations. You will, I am sure, see with me the propriety of such an active mind engaging in some pursuit; and I hope, ere his visit to us shall have ended, our united persuasions will have induced him to decide on becoming 'tinker, tailor, sailor, apothecary, plough-boy, or thief,' as the nurses say. Now, aunt, having finished my disquisition, I trust to the satisfaction of both, let me assist you up the slippery oak staircase."

Either the allusion to the letter and the interview was too home a stroke to be parried, or the playful smile with which she offered her arm was too sweet to be resisted; for the old lady said no more, but kissed her and took her arm.

CHAPTER II.

Yet, e'en in yon sequester'd spot,
 May worthier conquest be thy lot,
 Than yet thy life has known:
 Conquest, unbought by blood or harm,
 That needs nor foreign aid, nor arm,
 A triumph all thine own.

Such waits thee, when thou shalt control
 Those passions wild—that stubborn soul—
 That mars thy prosperous scene.
 Hear this from no unmoved heart;
 Which sighs, comparing what thou art
 With what thou might'st have been.

SCOTT.

Je préfère, sans hésiter, l'âne qui porte sa charge, au lion qui dévore les hommes.

"WHAT a gad-about! you are, my gentle cousin," said Robert Euston, as he handed Miss St. Maur from her little

pony carriage the next day about one. "Not at home twenty-four hours, before you start on a round of visits, and cheat me out of my ramble with you. I have been waiting for you these two hours."

"Your watch goes by steam, I calculate, thou most impatient of cousins! You were not here at half-past twelve, and I shall be ready in ten minutes. Could I have imagined you so changed as to wish to visit Suky Watts and Jenny Jenkins, I would have waited for you."

"Thanks, gentle lady! But I hate morning visits, and neither admire dirty children nor smoky huts."

"No, you never had much taste for the picturesque."

"How well and happy you are looking, Helen," said her aunt, or rather great-aunt, for such she was. "Has any thing very delightful occurred this morning?"

"Yes, a great many things."

"Pray let us hear some of these delightful things."

"Hear them? Impossible! They are things to be felt, not told. The whole of the village was in an ecstasy at the sight of me. The women curtsied, laughed and cried; the children shouted; the curs barked and wagged their tails; and the very cats purred with delight. Nay, I even fancied the woods looked greener for my presence; and the waterfall greeted me with a softened murmur. They who say the poor are ungrateful wrong them, unless they exempt Hurlestone from the general censure. In short, Robert, I wanted you there to describe the scene, as you did the delicate-nerved Miss Jones last night."

"Did I describe Woodbine Cottage other than it was?"

"I believe not; but I could not bestow on it the observation it deserved, for a blue-eyed damsel was sitting at an open window below, breathing the balmy air of morn; whilst a pair of twinkling grey eyes, that seemed as if they could see what was, and what was not, surmounted by a cap of novel form, were peeping over the blind at the window above."

"The mother and the daughter! Before the hour of five the former will have tramped over half the country, describing the heiress, and boasting of having had the first sight. So tremble, lady fair! and the latter will have looked you out a lover, and woven the romance of your future fate."

"Are you sure she is not too busily engaged in weaving the web of fate for herself to think of me?"

"Why should you imagine it: has she already been whispering a tale of love into your sympathising ear?"

"No! but I saw her watching a stranger, who, in manners and appearance, might figure as the hero of a romance."

"Whom do you mean?" inquired Mr. Euston rather hastily.

"That is more than I can tell; but Bran seems to have taken a dislike to him, and as he quieted my refractory pony, and insisted on his passing the stream at the end of the village, even I felt there was something rather awful and sublime about him."

"Impertinent fellow! I'll teach him to interfere," muttered Mr. Euston.

"Great impertinence, certainly, most gallant cousin! to assist a lady in distress. The sex will thank you, if you instruct all impertinent strangers, that ladies prefer being overturned in the mud, or drowned in a brook, to having to say, 'Thank you,' for a service done, lest it should chance to displease a moody cousin."

He felt the rebuke, though playfully conveyed, but was little inclined to submit to it.

"You seem to rate his services somewhat highly. Hurlestone brook would scarcely drown, and a slight accident might teach you in future to take some one with you."

"One thousand and one thanks for wishing me a slight accident, and know James had left my pony's side but an instant before to deliver a message. But as my preserver seems no favourite of yours, let us talk no more about him."

"Some strolling player, who enacts Othello in a barn, and stabs Desdemona to the heart with his own hand; some scrawler of rhymes fawning for a subscription; or some destroyer of the human face divine; or dauber of landscapes with red and yellow skies, rich green fields, and bright blue lakes, booing for an order. And to call such a creature your preserver! Miss Jones herself could not say more of him. I suppose he must be fêted at the Park to convince him of your eternal gratitude. Pray let me know his name and abode, that I may—"

"Instruct him in playing the part of Othello? or assist him in writing a sonnet on good temper?" asked she archly.

He coloured, and the cloud on his brow became heavier. She was sorry to see it, as she had hoped her hint to Mrs. Hargrave would have induced that lady to retract any encouragement she might have given before; and that his promise of the preceding night would not be broken so speedily. Both were silent, till Helen said,

"You cannot be sorry, Robert, that I was saved from accident; and, though I called the stranger my preserver, I have no idea of fêting him, or the slightest wish ever to see him again; unless, indeed, you could prove him to be player, poet, or painter, and then I would willingly purchase his tickets, subscribe to his rhymes, or patronise his paintings, as bound in gratitude. I am now ready for my ramble, and if you can better keep your promise of last night, I shall have pleasure in your company; but if we can never meet without the chance of a quarrel, I shall be obliged to confine myself to the bare limits of politeness. Am I to have the pleasure of your company or not?"

He took her extended hand, drew it within his arm without speaking, and in a few minutes they were walking through the wood. The gentleman would have taken the path that led to the village, but the lady said she had been there in the morning, and turned in a contrary direction.

When they returned, it was evident some explanation had taken place between them. The trace of tears was visible on Helen's cheek, yet were her smiles more free and joyous, and her whole manner to her cousin more frank, more warm, and more endearing, than she had ventured to be in the morning. On Robert's part, every vestige of ill-humour had vanished, but he looked paler and more melancholy, though evidently struggling to subdue every appearance of sadness; and his demeanour to Helen, though kind and attentive, had nothing of the lover-like tenderness of the night before.

Both exerted themselves with success to render the conversation gay and animated; and before the close of the evening, Mrs. Hargrave had the surprise of hearing her favourite announce his intention of consulting Lord Hunsdon, his cousin and one of the secretaries of state, about procuring some official situation.

The old lady seemed as much displeased as surprised at this new arrangement, and spoke at some length against the toils of public men, the intricacies of diplomacy, the intrigues of secretaries, &c. and ended by wondering why he could not remain as he was, as he had a fortune of two thousand a-year at least, and might increase it by marriage; or, if he must have an occupation, let him become a magistrate, or a clergyman, or even a lawyer, and then he might still live near Hurlstone.

He coloured with indignation as he replied, "You know me but little, if you can suppose I would allow sordid motives to

influence me in a union which must decide my future fate. Why should you believe me capable of such baseness? As for becoming a magistrate, I have no taste for committing ragged beggars, starving poachers, or crying women. I entertain the horror of a culprit towards 'Burn's Justice,' and the terror of a rogue towards 'Blackstone's Commentaries.' I am too bad or too good to become a clergyman. Too volatile, I fear, to perform the duties of a good minister, and too conscientious to undertake such an awful charge lightly. There may be labyrinths of intrigue, and depths of chicanery, in some political characters; but shame on the heart that could think, and the tongue that will say, Britons cannot be governed by honest men!"

"Mighty fine!" said the old lady, who, besides seeing that she stood alone, could not but be aware that her allusion, situated as the cousins were, was both indelicate and impolitic. "The time may come when you may wish you had consulted the aunt instead of the niece; but old people are supposed to know nothing now."

She left the room as she finished speaking, and Mr. Euston paced the apartment in wrath for some minutes, and then flung himself into a seat in a distant window. His eyes were turned on the lovely prospect before him, but his mind was engaged on other matters, and his gloomy silence seemed likely to continue.

"Dear Robert!" said Helen, approaching him and playfully fanning him with a rose, "do not let my aunt's words chafe you thus; you know full well her expressions, when angry, are never guarded, and you should not heed them. Think no more of the past, but come and sing with me."

He made no reply, he did not even turn towards her. She spoke still more kindly, and displaced the hand that shadowed part of his face, still he neither moved nor spoke.

"Robert! dear Robert! why is this? If you already repent your morning's plan, there are none to hold you to it."

"I do not repent, Helen; but leave me, I cannot brook your contempt;" and he withdrew his hand from her touch, and again shaded his face, but not before she had been startled by his pale and haggard look.

"I cannot, I will not leave you thus. Surely you cannot hold me responsible for the anger of another! And why do you dread contempt from me? Tell me, Robert, for I will not quit you without a reply."

"Then take it," he replied, removing his hand and looking

full upon her. "It can matter little that the tongue should say what it wrings the heart to feel. Though your words may not be like your aunt's, are not your thoughts the same? Did she not brand me as base and sordid? and do you not deem me such even at this moment? Do not deny it," he continued wildly; "it would be in vain, I see it all, and we part to night for ever."

I will not deny it, dear Robert, since you will not believe me. But look upon me, and if you see one shadow of mistrust, then fly me if you will."

He took both her hands in his, and by the light of the pale moon looked deep into her eyes. She did not speak, but as he met her sweet confiding smile, and read in her eyes nothing but kindness, the cold chill of despair passed away, and hope once more beamed upon him.

"I am but a poor wavering creature; the denial I refused so lately, I gasp for now. Those lips never breathed a falsehood. Can you, will you, tell me you never once doubted the purity of my affection?" He grasped her hands more firmly, looked more intently in her face, and scarcely breathed as he awaited her answer. It was given in a firm but feeling tone.

"I can, I will. Should the whole world beside prove base, I could feel no doubt of you."

"Heaven bless you, Helen! now I am a man again. I know I am not worthy of you, and yet I cannot yield you to another; and could not live under your contempt."

"You are more than worthy of any, when you yield not to passion, and possess all the esteem and affection the fondest sister could bestow; besides, Mrs. Hargrave holds no influence over me."

"So I find to my sorrow! Yet, not so! I would not owe even my happiness to the influence of another, at least not in my better moods; but pass we that, I will not again distress you by referring to that subject, if I can command myself; but you must make allowances at times. Will you proclaim an amnesty for the past, and permit me to advise?"

"Where no offence has been felt, no amnesty is needed. We sovereigns must keep those things for grand occasions. Now speak, and I'll obey you."

"Do not think me actuated by pique, then, if I hint at your finding some annoyance from Mrs. Hargrave's becoming a fixture at Hurlstone. Though she has stood my friend till to-day, and though I believe she is as much at-

tached to you as she can be to any one, still I cannot but think her ill-tempered, weak, and injudicious."

"Weak and injudicious she certainly is, and not always in good humour; but I think she is fully aware I have been too long accustomed to act for myself to allow her a hope of ruling me. A temporary embarrassment in her affairs induced me to invite her here for the summer, in return for kindness shown to my dear mother in former days. As I shall visit some friends in winter, we shall then of necessity separate. I shall certainly act in accordance with your kind hint, as her affairs will by that time be arranged. In the meantime, with a little management, I think I can contrive to keep in good humour, and yet have my own way, which you were once impertinent enough to say was indispensable to my happiness."

"I have half a mind to repeat the impertinence. Your own way you always will have; for you never yield, but quell opposition by the fascinating smile and tone with which your most peremptory commands are conveyed. If I could put you in a passion, I should hope to rule."

"I shall consider all this as complimentary, though rather doubtful, and prove its truth by commanding you to come and sing with me."

Before Mrs. Hargrave returned to the room, Helen had prevailed on her cousin not to allude to what had passed, and the sound of their voices mingling together, had the power to banish all her former ill-humour.

"Do you know the people who are living at my cottage?" inquired Helen of her cousin the next morning, as he was assisting her to arrange some plants in the conservatory.

"We do not visit, but I have heard of them; they are a Captain Danvers, his wife, and a tribe of the little Danverses. The Captain is a man who delights in cant terms; talks little or big according to his company, and is in ecstasies at ragouts and Rhenish, in hopes such ecstasies will again enable him to put his feet under his 'friend's mahogany,' as he himself expresses it. His lady shows equal discrimination in admiring poodles and pâtés, conserves and conservatories, argand lamps and asparagus; and deems it so rude to make any difficulty about accepting a present, that it has been said, were any one to offer her an elephant, but hint at the trouble of getting it home, she would say, 'Oh! dear, no trouble at all, she could put it into her bag very easily.'

"Her eldest daughter is rather pretty, quiet, and pleasing;

the sons great gawky boys, too old to play marbles, too young to play men; so, generally speaking, playing the fool. Mrs. Jones says, Mr. Douglass, their next neighbour, a sickly East Indian, with a liver complaint, who talks of nothing but mulligatawny, Nullahs, and Punkas; shows some inclination to appropriate the gentle Emma, and hints that they will soon leave you at liberty to select more agreeable tenants. But then, Mrs. Jones will say any thing. *Parle du diable et il se montre!*" starting up; "here she comes, and, Helen, you must say, 'not at home,' for I want you to ride with me, and give your opinion of my new lodge."

" 'Here she comes! and you must ride with me!' Who comes? and who says I must?"

"Mrs. Jones comes; and I never can be in her company, or that of her daughter, without being guilty of some piece of wickedness; so that, if you have any regard for my morality, spare me the temptation."

"I have no time to discuss the propriety of resisting temptation, rather than from fleeing from it, as she must, I think, have seen tis, and I cannot be rude on such light evidence. Why is this aversion of yours? and is there sufficient reason for refusing her visits? as I never deny myself on slight grounds."

"She is the widow of the celebrated Doctor Jones, who killed the poor gratis, and robbed the rich to support the widows and orphans of his own making. None but an undertaker could think of patronising his relict. Then, for herself, she is the arrantest gossip in all Europe, and her daughter—"

" 'Stop, Robert, stop! lest even now
Your words the bounds of truth o'erflow.'"

The memory of such a man as Doctor Jones throws a radiance around his descendants, and his widow and child must, for his sake, meet with civility at Hurlestone. His skill once saved my father."

"Then, farewell! for once admit her, and there will be no time for our ride."

"A compromise then. Order the horses round in half an hour, and my habit shall counsel a brief visit. In the mean time," she added, laughing, "do you entertain the ladies."

As Miss St. Maur was entering the drawing-room in her hat and habit, she was joined by her cousin.

"Is this obeying my orders," she asked, laughing.

"I was too timid to enter the room without your protection, and left your aunt to amuse them."

" 'On Heaven, and on your lady call,
And enter the enchanted hall,' "

was her playful reply, throwing open the door as she spoke.

The usual bows, courtesies, and introductions having passed, and the company being duly seated, Robert as far from Mrs. Jones and as near his cousin as circumstances would allow, a short dissertation on the weather followed. Notwithstanding the great respect of Mrs. Jones for the heiress of Hurlestone Park, she could not refrain from fidgetting, and taking surveys of the room and its contents; whilst the reproving looks of the sentimental Susan, the mischievous glances of Mr. Euston, and the sometimes *mal-apropos* answers of the lady heiress, when she chanced to be deeply, though slyly, engaged rating the worth of a silver vase, formed a combination almost too ludicrous for Helen's gravity to withstand. But withstand it she did, most heroically; and played the courteous hostess to perfection, little dreaming of the mischief her prying visitor was to occasion. Having satisfied her curiosity about the inanimate occupants of the room, nearly as much as she could expect in a first visit of a quarter of an hour, she began to speak on what had in effect caused that first visit to be paid so soon; her silly gossiping manner giving importance to what had intrinsically nothing important in it.

"I should not have thought of intruding so soon, before you had been to church either; only I was afraid you might have been frightened yesterday, so I said to Susy this morning—"

"Susannah, mamma, if you please," said the young lady interrupting her, colouring highly as she added, "my darling mamma's total oblivion of denominations, is most nervously distressing sometimes."

This was said in an apologetic tone to Helen, who smiled goodnaturedly, and remarked, that Mrs. Jones had doubtless many more important things to think of.

"Indeed, ma'am, you are quite right; for Susy, as her poor dear father used to call her, though she will be called Susannah now, never thinks of every thing. There have I all the trouble about the preserves, and the pickles, and measuring out the sugar and pepper, and giving out the soap and candles, and ordering the dinner, and every thing; and, would you believe it! she has pulled up all the sweet marjo-

rum, and camomile, and thyme, out of the garden, and will have nothing but useless flowers."

"Miss Jones only shows her wisdom, in following the advice of the immortal Swan of Avon, by 'taking time by the forelock,'" said Mr. Euston, assuming a most sentimental air.

La belle Susanna, as she liked to be designated, had penetration enough to perceive that irony was intended, as well as the amusement her mother's detail of family affairs and grievances had occasioned, and to hide her mortification proposed instant departure, on the plea of not detaining Miss St. Maur from her ride; but Helen, pitying her distress, assured her the horses would be announced when ready, and then paying high yet delicate compliments to her late father, acknowledged her debt of gratitude.

The feelings of the child triumphed over affectation, and Susan's looks and tearful eyes spoke her sense of the virtues of her lost parent. Even Mr. Euston was half ashamed of his conduct. Had they departed then all would have been well, but Mrs. Jones had something to learn, as to depart as ignorant as on her entrance was not to be thought of. Robert's speech puzzled her, as she could neither comprehend how a swan could give advice, or thyme have a forelock; but, finding the riddle too hard to solve, she gave up its solution in despair, and again began her attack on Helen.

"As I was saying, I hope you were not frightened yesterday. I was coming out to ask you to come in, when you drove off. I asked the gentleman if you were hurt, and a few other questions, but he only looked very grand, and would not say who he was, but stalked away muttering something I could not hear. He seemed very close I thought; but perhaps he had good reasons;" and here she looked very mysterious. "Well, I thought, as I said to Susy this morning, it would be but civil to come and ask if you were frightened, and who the gentleman was?"

"Oh yes!" interrupted Miss Jones, "you cannot think how dreadfully nervous I felt, when I saw your palffy rear, and beheld the gallant stranger rush forward to your rescue. My whole frame trembled, and my heart refused to beat, when I considered that life or death depended on the next fleeting moment. A cry of rapture escaped me, when I saw you placed beyond the thrill of danger. Then the expression of ardent devotion, that gleamed from his luminous eyes, as you returned your tenderly grateful acknowledgments"—(things which she could neither have seen or heard, but only ima-

gined)—and the enraptured, and soul-absorbing attention, with which he stood gazing after you as you banished from his sight, must have deeply interested every heart illumined with one ray of sympathetic feeling. I can well imagine what you felt during the whole scene, and I hope he has not suffered from his heroic bravery. Tell me his name, that it may ever live bright in my memory.”

“Why Susy,” said her mother, “you told me it was Mr. Valentine St. Valorie, an artist, though I said I would ask Miss St. Maur, to make sure.”

“I beg your pardon, mamma,” replied the young lady, colouring; “I only said the noble stranger answered to the betwitching description of Valentine St. Valorie, in the ‘Unforgotten;’ and I had no doubt, from the highly intellectual expression of his countenance, he had a taste for the fine arts.”

“Well versed in some of the arts, at least,” said Mr. Euston bitterly, as he fixed his searching eyes on his cousin’s blushing face, giving to the mysterious look of Mrs. Jones a meaning she had scarcely intended. “Pray Miss Jones favour us with a description of this sublime stranger, as my cousin might be supposed to be partial. Is he tall?”

“Tall! Ah yes! Far above the middle height, of a majestic presence; stately and commanding; a fine Roman nose; so pale, so interesting; a mouth like a Grecian statue; eyes whose radiance would be too dazzling, were not their brilliancy shadowed by long dark lashes; above these a lofty brow, over which falls, in wild and graceful disorder, a rich profusion of glossy ebon curls.

‘His stature manly, bold, and tall,
Built like a castle’s battled wall,
Yet moulded in such just degrees
His giant strength seems lightsome ease.
Close as the tendrils of the vine,
His locks upon his forehead twine.
But ’tis his dignity of eye!
There, if a suppliant would I fly
Secure, ’mid dangers, wrongs, and grief,
Of sympathy, redress, relief;
That glance, if guilty, would I dread
More than the doom that spoke me dead!’”

“Oh certainly! I understand perfectly,” said Mr. Euston in a still more fierce and bitter tone, as she finished her declamation. “Tall, hook nose, sallow complexion, ebon locks, hawk’s eyes. I see it all; I have him before me now; one of

Salvator's banditti ; a youthful Mahmoud ; an ancient Horatius ; a superb specimen of the heroic and sublime ! In short, one of your Werter sort of fellows, so irresistible among the ladies ; Childe Harold the second ! If it be not presuming too far, Miss St. Maur, may we request to be favored with the name of this devoted hero of yours. I am dying for an introduction."

Vexed and distressed at the turn the conversation had taken, Helen had hitherto sat silent ; blushing and confused, either from the stern looks of her cousin, or from the remembrance of the interview with the stranger ; but now Robert's unkind and ungenerous conduct gave her courage to answer his question, meeting his full gaze calmly and proudly as she spoke.

"I am not acquainted with the stranger's name, and only know him as one to whom I am indebted for an act of courtesy and politeness, no gentleman similarly situated would have hesitated to perform. My life was never in danger ; but, had it been, I have no doubt he would have been man enough to endeavour to save it. Should an opportunity of introduction occur, the stranger's wishes must be consulted."

Mr. Euston's eyes sank beneath the calm reproving look of his cousin, who, to change the conversation, proposed a visit to the conservatory. To this Mrs. Jones and her daughter gladly assented, and soon after took their leave. The horses were announced at the same moment ; and to avoid a discussion with her aunt, which seemed likely to ensue, Helen obeyed the summons instantly ; and contrary to custom, when Robert was present, was handed to her saddle by the old grey-headed groom. She struck into a canter immediately, and continued riding at a quick pace, till a hill obliged her to breathe her horse. Her cousin varied his pace in accordance with hers, but "spoke never a word."

On they rode parallel, but a little space apart, neither uttering a syllable ; the one too indignant, the other too angry with himself and others to converse, till the road branched off in two opposite directions—the one leading to Mr. Euston's lodge, the other returning by a circuitous rout to Hurlestone. Helen turned into the latter, and her cousin, after a moment's hesitation, followed her lead for a few paces in silence, but seeing her prepare to increase her speed, he intimated, in rather a surly tone, that she had mistaken the road.

"I have not mistaken the road," she replied calmly, as she continued her way. There was another brief silence, and then Mr. Euston, with a flushed cheek and frowning brow,

bade her, "Good morning." "Good morning, Mr. Euston," she replied, bowing gravely, and passed on.

There was a pause, a struggle, and in an instant more he was again at her side.

"How am I to understand this conduct, Miss St. Maur?" and he laid his hand on her horse's rein, and looked full in her face.

"How do you wish to understand it, Mr. Euston?" said the lady, in the same calm tone she had used before, and without shrinking from his look.

"This is mockery, for my wishes have lost their influence. Tell me, is it your intention we should part thus for ever?"

"I have no intention of the sort at present."

"No! you would throw all the blame of the intention upon me. But I can read the riddle. I can see the truth. The companion of childhood must yield place to the acquaintance of yesterday. But this upstart shall pay the penalty of his presumption, and shall not win the prize so easily. The introduction you refuse shall be obtained through other means; and ere we meet again he shall have defended or relinquished his claim;" and he flung her bridle fiercely from him.

"This may not be! molest this stranger, and, as you say, we meet no more."

"Ha! is it come to this then? Was the riddle truly read?"

"Is it come to what, Mr. Euston? And how read you a riddle, when there is none to read?"

"If there were no riddle, why that blush? The heiress of Hurlestone is no timid country maiden, to colour at a look and tremble at a word; she has been noted for her self-possession. You may look coldly and proudly now, Helen, but you cannot deceive me. You have met that stranger before."

"I have."

"I knew it, I knew it;" and the bridle fell from his hand, whilst his pallid cheek and quivering lip bespoke his agony. Helen was softened; but before she could sooth him his anger broke forth again.

"I knew you had met before. I saw it; I felt it. But you shall meet no more. You may refuse my love, but you shall wed no wandering beggar."

Helen could not but feel alarm at his wrathful look, but she also felt this was no time to show it; to yield now would be to become the slave of his passions. She felt this interview must decide the point of her free agency: collecting her-

self, therefore, she replied, in as calm a tone as she could assume,

"By what right, and on what plea would Mr. Euston interfere in my concerns, and how dare he thus heap insult upon insult?"

"Helen! Helen! can you ask such a question in such a tone? Is all that has passed between us thus forgotten? Speak warmly, speak angrily, any thing but that cold and chilling tone!"

"To speak angrily were to bring tempest to tempest; to think on the past were but to dwell on promises made only to be broken, of indignities repented of only to be repeated."

The young man writhed beneath her words and looks, for even in his passion he could not deny their truth. He paused a moment, then laid his hand upon her arm, whilst his cheek changed from pale to red each second, as he said: "Answer but one question! make but one promise!"

"I make no promise, for then I should keep it; I answer no question, for you have no right to ask it."

"You do right, lady! Oh! that I could but acquire such calm, cold prudence!"

"You shall have my best wishes for success in such an attempt."

"Doubtless! it would save you fears for your minion's safety. You will not answer, for you love him! You will not promise, for you will wed him!" and he pressed more closely to her, and grasped her arm more firmly.

"Stand back, sir!" said she indignantly, extricating her arm from his grasp, and backing her horse till the bank, that bounded the road, prevented her putting a further space between them.

"How dare you use such language to me? What levity have you seen in the conduct of Helen St. Maur that you should tax her with yielding heart and hand, unwoed, unasked, to one seen but twice? Where is your promise of yesterday? Where is the manly feeling that should make you scorn to insult a woman? Shame! Robert, shame! You but degrade yourself, not me, by such suspicions. I have borne your reproaches too patiently, or you had not dared to insult me thus; you had not dared, this morning, to waken blushes by your looks, and then give gossips a right to tattle of my confusion. Your pardon if I guard against such insults for the future. Henceforth we meet but rarely; bring my name still more before the public by seeking this stranger, and the

doors of Hurlestone Park are closed against you for ever. Farewell !” She bowed, with flushed cheek and flushing eye ; and before he could answer her horse was many paces before him, proceeding at no gentle speed.

It was not the first time he had justly offended his cousin by his violent conduct ; but as he had never insulted her so far before, so had he never before seen her so decided and indignant. He had tried to catch her bridle as she passed, but the effort had been vain ; and he made no further attempt to stay, or follow her. The warmth and sincerity of her indignation at his suspicions, convinced him of their incorrectness despite that tell-tale blush ; and he felt, if innocent, he could never expect her to forgive him. He thought not of his horse ; he thought not of standing thus strangely in a public road, exposed to the gaze and wonder of passers-by ; he thought of nothing but Helen—of her indignant looks—of her indignant words. He sat pale and motionless on his horse, who, unrestrained, fed on the grass and wild flowers growing by the side of the road. So completely was he lost to all around him, that he knew not he was an object of observation to any, till a voice close beside him said, “ I am afraid you are ill, Master Robert.” He started, and then first perceived Helen’s grey-headed groom was by his side. The first thought was that Helen had sent him.

“ Did my cousin send you to inquire ?” he questioned eagerly.

“ No, Sir ! Miss Helen is on before, but seeing you look so pale, I could not ride after her without stopping to ask if you were ill.”

“ No, James, quite well !” said Mr. Euston, angry at having asked the question, since the answer had not been as he wished ; snatching up the reins as he spoke, and turning his horse’s head in the contrary direction.

“ Ah, Master Robert,” said the old man, who having grown grey in the service of the family, thought himself entitled to take liberties now and then, “ it’s many’s the time I have nursed you, and Miss Helen too, Heaven bless you ! and pretty children you was both of you ; and this is not the first time I have seen you quarrel : for I am sure ’tis that makes you look so pale. We old folks see a great deal, though we don’t say much.”

An angry flush and an impatient movement showed that the young man thought the old groom could talk more than enough.

"Now don't be offended, Master Robert," he continued; do but ride after my young lady, and say you are sorry, and she will look as sweet as ever. I never knew her refuse to forgive any one in my life; and see, she is waiting for you now on the top of the hill. Now do, Master Robert, do!"

"Peace, fool!" cried the irritated young man, angry at being supposed to be in fault, and that too by an inferior, and allowing passion again to master every better feeling. "Peace, I tell you! If your young lady be offended, she must get pleased again; I am not one to dance attendance on her humours. Ride on! she is waiting for you."

The servant did as he was ordered in silence, with a reproachful shake of the head, and Robert was again alone. Helen loitered on the hill for her attendant, but before he could reach the due distance in the rear, a horse dashed past him at full speed, and Mr. Euston again rode by his cousin's side. She took no notice of his approach, but appeared intent on guiding her horse down the steep descent, and nothing but a deeper flush upon her cheek told she was aware of his presence.

Unable longer to endure this silence, he at length said, in a deep and earnest voice, "Helen, can you forgive me?"

Unprepared for such a sudden change of conduct, she checked her horse, looked in his pale face, and then replied in a calm and soft, but melancholy tone, "You have wounded me deeply, Robert; ought you to expect forgiveness?"

"No! and I cannot forgive myself; yet if you knew the misery your anger occasions, you would pity me. I can make no apology for the past; I dare make no promise for the future. I only ask, can you forgive me?"

If his conduct had been more violent than usual, his sorrow seemed in like proportion, and Helen's was no heart to wound unnecessarily one whom she loved, by coldness or distrust; frankly giving him her hand therefore, she said, "I can and do forgive you; and, instead of pledge or apology, trust for the future to your native generosity."

The hand was taken, and warmly pressed; but neither spoke for a few minutes: words were not needed.

"Robert," said Helen, "there is still time to visit your lodge; this short cut will take us thither;" and she turned up a narrow lane as she spoke, which in due time brought them to the building. The lodge being duly seen and criticised, remarks made, and advice given, Helen prepared to return home. The groom gave place to the cousin in handing her

to her saddle, and in gallantry and gratitude he insisted on escorting her part of her way back. After some time, during part of which the gentleman seemed absent, Helen turned playfully to him, saying, "Now you shall hear all I know of the stranger."

"No, no ! not one word !" he replied hastily, colouring with shame at her having thus divined his wishes. "Let me show I can keep a good resolution for one day."

"You shall show that by listening ; otherwise I see clearly you will still imagine a thousand strange things. The only difficulty is, to know how to make a tale out of nothing. You doubtless guessed that I had visited the church-yard on the day of my return before I met you, and the thoughts of the past came over me as I stood there, and—but that matters not ! you can well imagine I was in no mood to wish for an observer, for sad thoughts will come sometimes despite our will : but to my tale. Bran's loud bark disturbed my meditations, and turning towards him, I saw, to my surprise, and at first terror, a black bushy head rising above one of the tombs near me. Vexed at having had a spectator of my weakness, I left the place immediately, and saw no more of the stranger till yesterday, when happening to pass just as my pony pretended fear of the bridge over the village stream, with common politeness he compelled the refractory animal to obedience. My thanks were as brief as the service required, and here ends what, with wild actors, might have turned out the tragedy of 'The Stranger !' "

This frank and unembarrassed explanation one would have thought must have proved quite satisfactory ; but one doubt still remained, and this was not lost on our heroine, who said, "What, not satisfied now ? On my word, you are unconscionable !"

"Forgive me ! I am ashamed of myself. I had no right to expect an explanation, and your account is quite satisfactory ; but—"

"But you are not satisfied. Away with the ugly word, it mars every sentence in which it finds a place. You hear of perfection, and give up yourself heart and mind to love it ; and then at the end comes in a 'but,' and you learn your love has been thrown away, and that perfection is not perfection. Give me no more buts then, and you shall ask three questions, if there be need for so many ?"

Ashamed to avail himself of her permission, and yet too

jealous to act the generous part and decline it, he at length stammered out "Your blush?"

"My blush!" she said, colouring as she answered. "If Robert 'gave this cheek a little red,' how could I help it? Have you known me so long, and yet not discovered that, despite all the adulation which, as an heiress, *et par consequence* a beauty, I have received, I have never conquered that very silly and inconvenient habit of blushing? The flatterers say,

"My mantling blood, in ready play,
Rivals the blush of early day."

"Then the stranger had the impertinence to offer adulation? I thought as much."

"I should hope my general conduct is such as to warrant the conviction that I should neither receive or suffer impertinence from a stranger, however I may bear with it from a relation."

"You are severe, but I may not resent your severity, for I deserve it."

"Then is it not severity?"

"Nay, but you bade me ask a question, and yet give it not frank answer."

"Ask it again then, if you will be so bold, and my pledge shall be redeemed."

He hesitated: to decline putting the question he felt would be to take a higher place in her esteem, yet did jealousy overpower his better feelings, and he again asked, in a hurried tone, and with averted face, what had given rise to her blushes and confusion.

She answered coldly, "Your suspicions and violence."

"And was that all?" he said, in a freer but inquiring tone.

"Mr. Euston!"

"Pardon! pardon, Helen! The thought of this stranger rendering you a service drives me distracted; you think so much of gratitude."

"You wish me to forget all due to yourself, I must conclude, since you persist in such unworthy conduct."

"It is unworthy; I know it; and yet can I not avoid it. Your coldness to my suit—your very perfections, urge me to it; and I cannot resist the impulse."

"Say rather 'will not;' I am no believer in fatalism."

"Word it as you please; the feeling is still the same, Helen."

"And ever must be, if you strive not to curb it."

"They can talk wisely who feel calmly."

"Say rather, they can act wisely who strive earnestly; but it is lost time to bandy words with you. Farewell! for I must increase my speed to reach Hurlestone by dinner, or Mrs. Hargrave and the cook will grumble."

"Stay one moment; I have not asked my third question, and even I feel, if you depart now, I can never touch on the subject again."

"I am glad you see the impossibility, and will answer, though I am sorry you should require it; but remember, it is the last time you ask, or I answer questions on this subject, refer them to whom they may."

"I may not dispute your will, yet must ask now, for I feel this stranger will prove my rival. How looked he? and what said he?"

"Two questions in one! In good truth you are a thrifty questioner; but my answers will scarcely pleasure you—so do, good Robert, rest contented in your ignorance for once."

"Not so! Not so! How looked he, and what said he? Let me know my fate at once," he continued with vehemence.

"'He that will to Cupar, maun to Cupar,'" she replied, half in anger, half in merriment. "The stranger looked as Mr. Euston looks when Miss St. Maur's curls are arranged rather more becomingly than usual; and his words bore import that he considered the day on which he had succoured your poor cousin, as the brightest in his life. There now; said I not truly that my answer would bring you no pleasure?" she continued, as she marked his contracted brow. It ill suits you to be too curious, as you cannot expect a patent for making civil speeches."

He was angry, ashamed, and for a moment silenced by her arch look and merry answer; she saw her advantage and proceeded, though rather more gravely and earnestly than before.

"Here let this matter rest, and forever. I am grieved it has been discussed so long, since that discussion has shown me some things in my cousin's temper I had little wish to see. It will prove a warning for the future, and since frankness and confidence have not saved me from suspicion and mistrust, I must henceforth take higher ground, and resist the

first appearance of interference. "It is true there is no chance of my meeting this stranger again, but remember my words apply to future occasions, though the actors may be different. I will be free to speak and act as I please. It rests with you to decide if we part now as friends."

He liked not her determination; but the assertion of the improbability of her again meeting the stranger; the real kindness of her manner, even when indignantly blaming his interference, joined to the conviction of his own conduct having been highly improper, made him gladly avail himself of her offer to part on friendly terms, and before he took his departure he stood pledged to a more peaceable line of conduct for the future; and she in return had promised to take Mrs. Hargrave over the next day to show her his house and grounds.

CHAPTER III.

Oh! lady dear, fair is thy noon,
But man is like the inconstant moon;
Last night she smiled o'er lawn and lea;
That moon will change, and so will he.
Thy time, dear lady, 's a passing shower;
Thy beauty is but a fading flower:
Watch thy young bosom and maiden eye,
For the shower must fall, and the flow'ret die.

Hogg.

Nor vice nor virtue has the power,
Beyond the impression of the hour.
And oh! when passion rules, how rare
The hours that fell to virtue's share.

Scott.

To make matters more clear, and to free my heroine from a suspicion of acting with more than necessary severity towards her cousin, it may be as well perhaps to recur a little to the past. The marriage of Mr. St. Maur and his amiable and lovely wife, though desirable in a worldly point of view, as healing an ancient enmity, and uniting two adjoining properties, arose wholly and solely from the purest affection on both sides. Their happiness was as perfect as highly religious feelings, a union of mind and heart, and a congeniality

of tastes, could render it. Helen was their only child, and though they were, as might be supposed, most devotedly attached to her; still, if with so much happiness, they dared strongly to desire any thing, it was that a son might be granted to them, to keep up an ancient name, and inherit their large property. The delicate health of both rendered old age an event scarcely likely to occur to either, and having no near male relative on whom they could rely, they felt all the dangers and difficulties to which one so lovely and so rich as Helen would be exposed, should she lose them ere old enough to guide herself. Too sincerely pious to murmur at the denial of their wishes, as each day rendered the possession of a son more doubtful, they applied themselves the more assiduously to fit their daughter for the important station in life it would be her fate to fill. Self-denial, enforced by precept and example, and her being but as a steward, who would be required to give an account of the talents committed to her charge, were the earliest lessons taught her. From her days of childhood, Helen was known to and blessed by the inhabitants of every cottage on her father's estate. Naturally charitable and warm-hearted, benevolence was to her a delight rather than a duty; but she owed it to her parents that her benevolence was judiciously exercised, and that her charity was founded on the pure motive of love to God, and not on the mere instinctive desire of a warm heart to relieve itself from the pain of beholding suffering. Nor were the sterner virtues forgotten in her education.

To render her firm and decided, where such conduct was fitting, was desirable for one who was likely to stand alone the uncontrolled heiress of thousands; and to be enabled to look into her own concerns, and thus prevent the temptation to speculation in some, or the risk of injustice to others, was no less a duty for one placed in her exalted situation. The quickness of her perception; the enthusiastic warmth of her disposition; the powers of her mind, almost amounting to genius; her unbounded confidence in those she loved; her indignation at every species of oppression; and the strength and intensity of her feelings, rendered her a being who would repay judicious culture a thousand-fold; but who likewise stood in need of that culture, to repress, encourage, and amalgamate a thousand-fold more than would a mind of a meaner stamp. The sweetness of her temper, the tenderness of her heart, though precious as native gold, still, like that metal, required the mixture of some sterner alloy to render it

truly valuable. This her parents saw, on this they acted, and it remained for her after-life to prove the good or ill success of their earnest endeavours.

For one so situated and so educated—an only child, an heiress, and a beauty—to be shy and timid, was what could not be, and what in her situation would not have been desirable, if possible; but to make her humble, trusting to a Higher Power than her own, and as far as might be free from vanity, and despising adulation, had been their first and chief endeavour. We will not say that she was perfect, nay more, we will allow that she was not; but, at seventeen, she was a being in mind and person, on whom loving parents might almost dote.

It was about this period that her father's symptoms of consumption became so strong and confirmed as to alarm all who loved him, and to render change of air desirable; and as he was unwilling to leave England, the mild air of Devonshire was recommended and tried. For a time he rallied, and repaid, by the hope of his recovery, the fond and unceasing attentions of his wife and child. But the hope proved false, the disease gained ground, the colour on the cheek grew brighter, and the eyes shone with more than their usual brilliancy. The cheek and the eye of the gentle and affectionate wife waxed brighter in sympathy, and ere Helen had attained her nineteenth year she stood alone an unprotected orphan; for the hearts so closely united in life, could not be parted in death, and the husband and wife slept side by side in the same calm grave. I shall not attempt to describe her feelings, they who have felt such a loss need no description, and they who have not could not understand it. With such parents it is unnecessary to say their last earthly thoughts, their last earthly prayers, were for her; nor need we say of one so good and dutiful, that their advice was treasured up as the rule of her future conduct.

To leave a female so young in full possession of a landed property of upwards of ten thousand a year, would, under other circumstances, have been as unwise as unusual; but, educated as she had been under this expectation, they deemed it better to entrust her with the charge at once, large as it was, and confide in her prudence, than fetter her with any restrictions. Aware of her anguish at their loss, and unwilling to sadden her young mind, or connect Hurlestone with any painful remembrance, they gave up the idea of resting in their family vault, and by their own express desire were

buried in the humble church-yard of the village where they died. Besides this, they won from her a promise not to yield to her sorrow, but to mingle with others, however painful the first effort might be. Her fragile form, and the extreme delicacy of her whole appearance, had more than once alarmed them lest consumption should yet claim another victim; and the medical men more than hinted, that the spirit's strife would most probably prove fatal. The promise once given was religiously kept; and though, in losing her parents, Helen had lost almost all that in her eyes then rendered life valuable, the good seed that had been sown brought forth its fruit, and feeling deeply she yet bowed in resignation to the stroke. There was another point on which her father had felt and spoken strongly. Robert Euston was the only child of his half sister, who, early left a widow and the guardian of her son, allowed her doting fondness to degenerate into folly; and, seeing no faults in her darling boy, of course she attempted to check none. Stanmore being only five miles from Hurlestone, Robert spent almost as much time at one as at the other; and Mr. St. Maur, admiring his many noble qualities, took infinite pains to curb his violence, and give him fixed principles; but the silly indulgence of the mother marred the wise plans of the uncle, and he grew up, though generous and forgiving, yet wavering, unstable, and violent in the highest degree. With many virtues, so great was his impetuosity, so violent his passions, that all who loved him trembled too. His could be no even course through life; he might pass from one extreme to the other, tossed to and fro as reason or passion held the temporary rule; but the pole star of religion was wanting to guide him aright. The magnet that could alone pilot him through the rocks and quicksands of the sea of life, was to him, as yet, an undiscovered thing; at least, if its powers were known they were unfelt.

Brought up so much with his cousin they were as brother and sister, and next to their parents each was the person most beloved by the other. To this feeling they had no objection, and saw with pleasure that Helen's gentle yet firm temper gave her the rule over her cousin, sometimes even in his wildest moods; but they were too anxious for the happiness of their child not to see, that, when the girl should pass into the woman, and the boy expand into the man, the quiet affection now subsisting between them might melt into a warmer feeling. Besides that, they wished no closer union between cousins; they felt that their nephew's temper would risk the

happiness of any woman connected with him, however tenderly he might be attached to her, and it rested with the future to decide his character for good or ill. With such ideas on the subject, and with a vague fancy that they could even then trace in Robert's conduct the dawning of a more tender feeling, Helen received from her parents, but a short time before their death, earnest warnings and strong advice as to her future behaviour. Whilst they left her free, should time or any alteration in Robert's character make her feelings towards him other than that of sister, and only stated their disapproval of a marriage between cousins as an objection and not a prohibition, they still urged her to consider well ere she should unite her fate to one so vehement and unsteady. It was from a consideration of these defects in his disposition, that, though her nearest relative, they gave him no charge to watch over the interests of their child, as they saw he was neither a safe guide or wise counsellor; and bade her rather trust to her own sense and fortitude, or the advice of older friends, in all affairs of importance, than by appealing to him, sanction his control. "Helen," said they, we know you will not marry an immoral man; but beware how, relying on your own sweetness, you allow yourself to be dazzled by brilliant qualities, and unite yourself with a violent temper. Who shall stay the tide of passion! Not the arm of man! not the smile of woman! and the habitually passionate man is no Christian. Genius and heroism may dazzle for awhile, but if they have no firmer basement, and no purer hope, than the power of man's proud mind, or the yearnings of man's proud heart for popular applause, rule, or wealth, they are but little better than the comet's glare; and woe to those who come within its influence." She listened to this advice, as she did to all from those she loved, with delightful attention; yet, it must be owned, she thought it would prove unnecessary; as judging from her feelings, she saw no probability of Robert's ever being to her other than he was then. Unhappily for her, time showed the advice had not been vainly given; and within a year after the death of her parents, she found it necessary to assert her independence. At first, without hinting his own wishes, he allowed his jealousy of all who approached Helen under the age of fifty, and even some above, to shew itself in satirical remarks and affronts; so that, despite all her prudence and perfect indifference to the crowd who surrounded her, she was more than once on the point of becoming the innocent cause of a quarrel.

At first she remonstrated in gentle terms, then more strongly ; till, finding entreaties and remonstrances alike vain, and indignant at the little regard he showed for her delicacy or feelings, she threw off the yoke to which he would fain have subjected her ; and, veiling her fear of his threats under the appearance of firmness, she insisted on her right to act as she pleased, and hinted at being obliged to decline any further communication with him, should he persist in his present improper line of conduct. It was then, that staggered by her firmness he openly avowed his love, and pleaded his cause with unmanly and ungenerous violence.

Shocked at finding her worst fears realized, and alarmed at his fearful threats against any one who should obtain her hand, she refused to listen to his protestations of affection, and left the room.

In vain he called day after day ; she refused to see him ; till, hearing she was ill, in an agony of shame and repentance, he sent her the most ample apologies for the past, and the most unbounded promises for the future. The apologies and the promises were accepted, and to outward appearance the feelings of the cousins were as before ; but each had learned a lesson, and each put that lesson in practice. The gentleman showed less violence in acts and words, if not in feeling ; and the lady was vigilant to check the slightest interference.

This calm was not to last long. Robert could only exist in alternate storm and shine ; and poor Helen found, that even the possessor of ten thousand a year could not pass through life without some vexations. One day he would be all she could desire ; the next, not a gentleman could approach her without a chance of insult ; and then again he would introduce every one they met, apparently to mark their first impression. Again she spoke firmly and decidedly ; and again the gentleman promised, and for a short time kept his promise ; nay, in compliance with Helen's persuasions, or won by the bright eyes of Lord Hunsdon's niece and his own third cousin, he consented to accept his lordship's offer of an official situation. It was in the hope and belief that he would, by winning her cousin, free her from all further importunity, that Helen bade him adieu a short time before her return to Hurlestone. Great therefore was her surprise and disappointment at finding such hope was vain.

His manner at their meeting was sufficient instantly to show the change in his views and feelings since they parted, whilst

the way in which he spoke of Lord Alford in the evening, made it clear to her experience his lordship was at present the object of his jealousy. It was then that remembered hints from Mrs. Hargrave convinced her she owed the present annoying change to that lady. Having hoped never to be subjected to his violence again, she was the more hurt and wounded at his unmanly vehemence, and again dreaded the future.

His conduct about the stranger distressed her more than she could understand, or probably would have liked to have told; and her indignation was in proportion. What rendered his conduct the more galling and unpardonable, was that, when the jealous fit was off, he would amuse himself with the beauty of the hour, and she sometimes doubted whether an apparent compliance to his wishes would not free her from his importunities: but to this Helen could not, and would not stoop; and she had only to hope, that some eyes brighter than her own might succeed in releasing her from further inconvenience. Hitherto, from her perfect indifference to all pretenders to her hand, his outrageous behaviour had only pained her, as exhibiting the errors of his character, and placing her in more than one awkward situation; but this indifference might not always continue, and what simply pained now, might agonize then. Sorry to be obliged to treat with coldness and apparent severity one to whom, despite all his faults, she was sincerely attached, she was delighted to hear, when she took Mrs. Hargrave to Stanmore, that urgent business would call him to town the next day, and detain him there some time; but what delighted her still more, were his voluntary and reiterated assurances of shame at his violence of the preceding day, and his renewed promise of seeking to procure some situation through Lord Hunsdon's interest. Need it be said, the cousins parted friends; and again Helen hoped peace for the future?

When the carriage had driven off, Mr. Euston flung a sovereign to James, who was in attendance, saying with a flushed cheek but a light laugh, "Your advice was good, my friend, but he stands in peril who would guide a wild bull."

The honest old man thanked his favourite with tears in his eyes, and hoped he should yet live to dandle another Master Robert. Whether Mr. Euston's good humour had any thing to do with having received proof, as he believed, of the departure of this dreaded stranger from the neighbourhood, we will not trouble ourselves to enquire; nor whether this same

stranger ever occurred to Helen's thoughts during the day. We will leave both questions to be decided by those who pique themselves on being able to see farther into a millstone than their neighbours.

We hate explanations ; so one more, and ye shall have done. It has been seen that Mrs. Hargrave's first wish was to bring about a marriage between the cousins ; and, should any one ask the reason, we must answer, that which influences a full half of the world—love of self ! In that case she trusted to living with the young couple. Failing to accomplish this union, her next wish was to keep Helen single, under the idea of residing with her. That the hope will, in either case prove fallacious, may be guessed from what has been said ; but, in the meantime, the old lady will doubtless plot and hope.

CHAPTER IV.

His was the port—the distant mein—
That seems to shun the sight, and awes when seen ;
The solemn aspect, and the high-born eye,
That checks low mirth, but lacks not courtesy.

BYRON.

With reverence be it spoken, I will try
To overcome the lightness of my nature ;
Our course you know, is generally zig-zag.

Ignis Fatuus.—FAUST.

THE library at Marston Hall was, in its noble owner's opinion, all that an Earl's library should be. That is, there were books in handsome bindings ; the writings of every Lord who had deigned to write from the time of Noah, down to that of George IV., save some few, whose opinions his Lordship thought, or imagined, had been a little (a very little) too strongly expressed. To mention any of these rejected addresses was painful to the Earl, who possessed that high-minded *esprit de corps*, that would fain to be blind to the peccadillos of the peerage, be the sinner Whig or Tory. Nor were the distinguished works of many commoners absent. But the books formed not the half of the excellencies and attractions of this temple of study. There were gold inkstands, and bronze inkstands, and China inkstands ; flanked by portfolios of scarlet morocco, and purple morocco, and green mo-

rocco ; resting on tables, to give an accurate account of whose shapes might have puzzled the most learned geometrician ; some with three legs, and some with one leg, and some with no leg at all. Here a richly ornamented easy chair, filled with air, moved, at the slightest touch, from one side of the apartment to the other, with the gentle but rather hurried motion of a flattered member of opposition gliding into a ministerial measure ; and there its ponderous and old-fashioned rival, immovable as the prejudices of fourscore, seemed frowning in contempt on its modern neighbour's facility of movement, and airy love of change. These two chairs might pass as models of the old and new schools, now waging sometimes cruel, sometimes playful warfare ; but we will leave it to wiser heads and graver pens to reconcile or elucidate the difference between them, only hoping, as all true patriots should, that the wisdom of the old will calm the vivacity of the young, and the activity of the young impart fresh vigour to the old.

Having no auctioneer's list at hand, I shall omit the description of couches, *réposoirs*, *chaises longues*, &c. that encumbered the room, with its various other ornaments of fanciful steps, busts, casts, &c. and pay my devoirs to the occupant of the recess of one of the large sash-windows, composed of twelve enormous panes of plate glass ; for being completely a modern mansion, Marston Hall boasted neither oriel or casement, stone mullion or tracery.

An elegant muslin curtain shaded the window, lest, as Lord Alford said, the light of nature should put out the light of science, or unravel the depths profound of political intrigue ; and shadowed by its folds, lounged on an airy couch Mr. Percy Dormer.

Have words been wasted on chairs and tables, and shall no speech be found to tell of Percy Dormer ? the talented ! the brilliant ! the dazzling ! the cynosure of bright eyes ! winning even by his stateliness. The admired of all admirers ; the embryo *premier* ; the heir of the earldom and estates of his uncle the Earl of Trevanian ? Not so ! As Sir Thomas Lawrence might have delighted to paint him, of course I shall find pleasure to write him.

His stature was six feet three, but of such manly proportions, that his great height was only remarked when brought into comparison with others. His pale complexion contrasted strongly with a profusion of glossy black hair, whose well yet negligently arranged curls, showed that, if he could have stooped to exhibit anxiety about his personal appearance, it

was there his pains would have been employed. But in truth there was not one particle of puppyism about him. He seemed to act up to Lord Chesterfield's advice, "Despise dress, but do not show your contempt for it." Every thing about him was gentlemanly and elegant; nothing foppish or trifling.

His dark penetrating eyes, "that wad'na let a body be," shadowed, yet scarcely softened, by lashes as dark as the eyes themselves: The fine aquiline nose, with its expanding nostrils; the thin, curled, and strongly defined upper lip; every feature, every movement, told of a lofty spirit, and of a mightier ambition than the being considered the most fashionable, the best dressed, or the handsomest man in England. His great personal beauty set upon him like the robe of an ancient statue in light and graceful ease: a thing belonging to, and yet unthought-of by the bearer. A brilliant imagination might have fancied him an antique statue modelled by the most skilful art, and animated by the Promethean fire of ambition.

The Times, containing a long and interesting parliamentary debate, had fallen at his feet; a clever political pamphlet lay open before him, half concealing one of the most brilliant passages in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*; but the pamphlet, though open, was turned topsy-turvy, and a glance served to show that politics held no part in the present thoughts of this highly-gifted personage. His age appeared about twenty-seven; his attitude was thoughtful; his eyes were turned on outward objects, but his thoughts followed not the same direction. A slight but transient flushing of the cheek, and a light contraction of the brows spoke a mind not quite at ease.

At length he made a rather sudden movement, as if to rise, and at that moment Lord Alford burst unceremoniously into the library.

"Dormer," said he, "I have ordered the horses round directly, and we will have a gallop to put me in a good humour again."

Mr. Dormer, who had half risen, calmly re-seated himself, apparently by no means pleased at the proposition; and told his friend he had better take his gallop alone, as, not having finished a pamphlet of which Lord Marston had requested his opinion, he could not accompany him.

"Never mind the pamphlet. Some silly political thing I suppose, to prove by demonstration plain—

'That the ins should be out, and the outs should be in.'

What is it?" approaching the table as he spoke. "Just as I
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said," he continued, taking it up, "and read as it should be, backwards I see. Throw politics to the dogs! and now come with me quietly, for it would be useless to pretend any longer you had been reading this trash."

His friend's pale cheek flushed with displeasure, and for an instant he looked confused, but immediately recovering himself, replied: "the pamphlet is a very clever one, throws light on the subject concerning which it treats, and if you—"

"No more, Dormer, an' you love me! I have just patiently endured one lecture on politics, and another would quite annihilate me. Ay, you may well looked surprised at my having patiently endured such penance, but what could I do? My good mother thinks I may as well enact the part of politician as that of idler; so to please her, I promised to think about it; nay, after some debate I consented, like a good boy, to listen to papa's arguments on the subject for one quarter of an hour. Not that I had the slightest intention of becoming your rival for the premiership, I assure you, or doing any thing more than think of the matter; but, to quiet my mother, I played politic for once, and having suffered the penalty, shall forswear policy for the future. As my evil star would have it, just before this appointed conference took place, a letter arrived to announce that the most immaculate town of T—— had to deplore the untimely death of Mr. Penton, one of its pure and patriotic members; that is, a gentleman who had spent thousands to come in, and then always voted for ministers, 'were they black spirits or grey;' conscientiously of course. Further, the precious epistle stated, that as only one gentleman had offered himself, and only two others were talked of, there was no doubt, if I started with the determination to promise and pay sufficiently, that I should prove the successful candidate. Well might they call his death untimely! but there are some people who never do any thing at the right moment. This was making it a closer argument than I had reckoned on, as my wise papa finds his other members so easy to manage, that he thought he might undertake the tutelage of another; and perhaps the vision of a marquise floated before him. However, I listened eighteen minutes and a quarter; fifteen to keep my promise to my mother, and the other three and a quarter because I could not extricate my coat from his grasp before."

"Well! and you stand for T——?"

"Do you take me for a fool, or a madman, Dormer?"

"Can none but such characters represent their countrymen?"

"He must be both combined to stand a contested election."

"I thank you," said his friend smiling, who had been returned three months before for the town of D——, after a violent contest of eight days, and at no slight expence. "What said your father?"

"Turned, fidgeted, and fretted—hoped, believed, and imagined."

"Hush, Alford! remember you speak of a parent."

His friend blushed at the rebuke. "Right, Dormer, but what can I do? If my father would but be an open foe, or an earnest friend, an outrageous Tory, or a violent Whig, I could respect him for sincerity at least; but, trimming and shifting! My bark should outride the storm, or sink with every sail set."

"Who would be the fool and the madman then, Alford? Take care how you confound prudence with policy."

"I should scorn the man, Dormer, who uttered such a sentence, were he one shade less noble and disinterested than yourself: but you know too well my father's conduct is politic, not prudent."

Mr. Dormer was silent for a moment, as he could not, and therefore would not deny the truth of the assertion, he then said:—

"But if your father will allow you to enter Parliament free and unshackled, why not run the race of honour? Come, Alford! let us sit side by side at St. Stephen's as we have done at St. Mary's."

The hands of the friends met with a fervent grasp, and the eyes of both glistened.

"It may not be, Dormer," said his friend softened; "it may not be. Such conduct on my part would but occasion more disputes between my father and myself." Then his wild mood broke forth again, and he continued as reckless as before. "What will become of your Utopian scheme, when I tell you, no sooner had my silence given my father reason to fancy I might become an M. P., than instead of leaving me unshackled, he began to counsel the embryo member how to be absent at one time, present at another; now to swell a majority, then to increase a minority; when to smile, and when to frown. I had rather be the veriest idler that ever cumbered the earth, than, under the mask of patriotism, sell my country for vanity or gold."

"How ended the conference?"

"Why, well nigh in my committal for high treason. A

command was issued that I should become a member for T—— : I acquiesced, and begged to state what would be my two first motions, unmindful of his horror at any thing so decided. Aware of my own deficiency ; and indeed convinced by observation, that a wise son seldom succeeds a wise father, and yet deeming whilst a Lower House should exist an Upper one a necessary balance, I should move that the House of Lords, and indeed the whole peerage, should henceforward be elective instead of hereditary. If defeated in thus ensuring wisdom to the legislators of the land, considering that the government of one fool would be less oppressive than the government of many, as in the former case at least there would be unanimity, I would move that both Houses should be swept away, and his most gracious Majesty be requested, Sultan-like, to reign without control, and that magna charta, habeas corpus, and the bill of rights, should be burnt at Smithfield, and an order in council issued to obliterate their memory.”*

“ What said he to this ? ”

“ Oh ! I left him, ere surprise and horror could permit him speech. As the door closed after me the storm burst forth, but so incoherent from its violence that I could distinguish nothing but lese majesty, sedition, and rebellion ; high treason, the Tower, and beheading. And now I have half a mind to start for T—— instantly, win over the electors, take the oaths, and make my motions, ere my father can well know I am an M. P. Methinks then I should be free from all further persecution. What say you, Dormer ? will you come and canvass for me, second the motion, and then soften the dreadful news to my father ? ”

“ Willingly ! ” said his friend, no longer able to control his mirth, at the idea of Lord Marston’s dismay. Alford joined in the laugh, and in a moment the cloud passed from his brow, and he was the same light thoughtless being as before.

“ Well, Percy, let us discuss the subject during our ride, for I do not wish to encounter the Peer again just at present.”

Dormer hesitated, and then said : “ Tell me which road you take, and I will meet you, for I cannot conveniently ride with you yet.”

“ Why not ? Never mind the pamphlet, you can give your opinion of it just as well without reading it. Only listen to all

* This was written long before the French had even hinted at agitating the question of doing away with an hereditary Peerage. Of course, Lord Alford is alone answerable for the wild folly of his jest.

my father says, and deal in general or rather complicated terms, and you will pass for a clever critic. What more objections? Are you anxious to run another tilt with my wild and wilful sister? who, like the merry monarch,

‘Never says a foolish thing,
And never does a wise one.’

Or are you inclined to hold a discussion on morals with my lady mother?”

“For shame, Alford!”

“Well, then! I’ll make amends, and say my dear mother is all that woman should be, and deserves a better son. And you prefer that horrid *brochure* to riding with me? Adieu then, for I hear the Earl’s aristocratic tread in the passage, and the sound conjures up the sea of heads below, and the axe of the executioner gleaming above.”

What Alford’s entreaties could not effect, was gained by the horror of a political dissertation from his Lordship, and Dormer signified his assent to the ride.

“No thanks!” said his friend archly, attributing his compliance to the right cause: “but follow me, or we shall be too late; a moment more, and I shall be committed to the Tower.”

He rushed to the window as he spoke, and leapt out, closely followed by Dormer. Too eager for flight to be very courteous to any impediment in their path, one or other of the young men, in his passage to the window, came in violent contact with the moveable chair mentioned before, and dispatched it on its travels with no common force. Away dashed the chair across the room, overturning in its progress two small tables, with their inkstands, &c.; putting one or two other pieces of furniture in motion, and never staying its riotous course till Pitt and Fox, Wyndham and Sheridan, thrown from their pedestals lay side by side upon the floor. The Earl opened the door just in time to hear the crash, and see the guilty author of this mischief standing quietly and demurely against the wall.

The grief and horror of the Earl at such sacrilegious devastation, deprived him of utterance. The fall of those master spirits could portend nothing less than the destruction of the constitution, the downfall of church and state, and the complete confusion of all former political opinions and subdivisions. Who could be the author of such a fearful crime? A loud laugh, and a clatter of horses’ hoofs drew him to the

window in time to see his guest and his son riding across the park at full speed, and clearing every impediment with the ease of eager sportsmen.

As the Earl of Marston is never in our opinion a very delightful companion, even when in good humour, now that he is in rather an awful mood, we will leave him to recover his dismay as he best can, and accompany the horsemen on their excursion.

"Why did you decline riding with me, Percy?" asked Alford, as after a long gallop they allowed their horses breathing time. "I am not so blind but that I could see something more than common in your refusal. Confess!"

"I am not philosopher enough always to have my inclinations under my own control," said his friend, rather angrily and haughtily, hoping to end the conversation.

"Oh! I cry your mercy! if you mean to rage. I am too cowardly a seaman to seek to weather Cape Wrath; but 'I think what I think!' as old Jane Smith says," looking sly and mischievous as he spoke.

"You and old Jane Smith may think what you please; but, wild as you are, even you must feel there are times when one would rather be alone."

"Humph! a polite hint delicately conveyed! But are you sure you wish to be alone? quite alone? Ah! a blush on Percy Dormer's cheek! Why such a thing is more rare and precious than the great diamond of the Queen of Portugal. No denial! no protestations! I know a blush when I see it; and when Mr. Percy Dormer looks red, other men should look white. But what is the matter," he continued, looking more earnestly at his friend's angry and confused countenance. "I never knew you so annoyed at my wild badinage before. Has any thing really happened to distress you? tell me and I will cease instantly."

"Nothing particular," replied his friend in a hurried yet rather softer tone; "but my head aches, and I wish to be alone. Which way are you going?"

"Oh! only a headache! and you wish to be alone! two rather suspicious symptoms. Save that I am convinced no mortal could be found to satisfy Percy Dormer's fastidious taste, I might imagine Romeo had found his Juliet; and, now I think of it, I fancy it must be so; for Miss Juliana Waitman assured me yesterday, when I rode over to escort you to Marston, that she really believed you were in love; for you wandered about all by yourself, sighed most piteously, and

read all the tender pieces in her Album. Now these proofs are conclusive. Who is the sighed-for mortal or spirit? Egeria or Undine?"

"Nonsense!" said his friend angrily. "What could Miss Juliana Waitman mean by talking about me? or what can you mean by repeating such folly?"

"What, indeed! as I told her. You are a person to be admired and revered, but never talked of. 'Oh, no!' she said, sighing, 'she felt that;' and you reminded her of some of Byron's heroes: Lara, or Giaffar, or Conrad, or Don Juan, or Beppo, or some of those, I forget which."

"Alford," said his friend still more angrily, though scarcely able to forbear laughing at the enumeration of heroes to whom he bore resemblance, "which road do you take? for I choose to ride alone."

"Such a brilliant thought has just entered my head," replied his friend with provoking gravity. "You shall be king of Greece! the very person for it! That frown would tame into submission Capo D'Istria, Mavrocordato, Botzaris, Canaris, and Robbelina herself: nay, I verily believe, one look would annihilate the Sultan Mahmoud, and demolish the Holy Alliance." Mr. Dormer's horse was reined back violently, and then urged to various curvetings, to conceal and dispel his rider's ill humour.

"Which way do you, take?" he repeated at length, in a stern and repressed voice. "There has been more than enough of this folly."

"So it seems; seeing you have allowed it to ruffle your temper. I take this road, as I have a note to deliver from my mother; and if you will accompany me, you shall have an introduction to one of the lions or lionesses of our neighbourhood: a lady under age, rich, lovely, and amiable!"

"I detest heiresses! They balance the merits of others in golden scales, and are themselves only fit to be sold to a goldsmith by weight. Though Gorgons, yet gilded by their riches, younger brothers and politic papas, hold them possessed of a hundred thousand charms; if really beautiful so much the worse; a woman's head, or rather heart, might by chance withstand the dangers of riches or beauty; but, united, there is not one could remain uncontaminated by the flatteries she would receive. As to Amiability, she is but a handmaid in the train of Riches and Beauty, or a hacknied word to be used when no other presents itself. I will have no introduction; there is your road, and we meet again somewhere on this; or each finds his way home as he can."

"Whew! what a tirade against heiresses! Now would I wager my wisdom you have been refused by a plump daughter of some wealthy cit. You shall have no introduction from me, I assure you; and beware! there is not a young man in all the shire would allow your remarks to remain unnoticed; if he knew they applied to Miss St. Maur. For my part I love Helen as a sister, and will never stand by patiently and hear her abused;" so saying, he put spurs to his horse, and left Dormer to recover his good-humour.

"My young lady has driven out with Mrs. Hargrave, my lord," was the answer at Hurlestone to Lord Alford's question, "Is Miss St. Maur at home?"

"Then perhaps I shall meet her on my return; if not, give her this note, and say I am sorry not to have seen her."

"Yes! my lord;" and away rode his lordship.

"How glad I am to see you, Helen," said Lord Alford, as he met her carriage on his return to Marston; "do walk up this hill with me, for I have a thousand things to say to you."

She complied instantly with good humoured readiness, and enquired kindly after his family.

"My mother, I am sorry to say, is as great an invalid as ever; and Catherine has a sore throat, which, though it prevented her calling on you to-day, has not tamed her in the least. My father is in a rage; with or without reason, I shall not take upon myself to decide."

Helen shook her head, but could not forbear smiling at his ludicrous account of the morning's fracas.

"And now, Helen, you really must come to Marston, and put us all in good-humour. My mother and Catherine are too unwell to visit you, but send their very best love, with a request that you will come to us on Monday, and remain till we have wearied you."

"Is this true?" asked she laughing; "for you recollect, you have ere now shown a talent for inventing pretty messages, and I am not inclined to play the part of the 'Uninvited.'"

"Will you never forget or forgive that prank of mine? But I am really and truly the bearer of such a message now, so do not deny me."

"Very well then; tell your dear mother I shall be with her on Monday, but must return on Saturday. It is so long since I have seen her I shall quite dream of my visit."

"Victory! victory!" cried he, waving his hat.

"What do you mean? I favour no tricks."

"There is no trickery ; only my sage mother and mad-cap sister had the impertinence to declare you would not come on my bidding, so insisted on loading me with a note, which I left at Hurlestone lest I should not meet you ; but now I shall have the triumph of announcing you come on my invitation alone."

"And more ; you may tell them I will come on your invitation any day, for I have not forgotten that you were always my protector and defender in my childish days."

He pressed the hand that rested on his arm, as he said, "Thank you ! Helen ; believe me you shall never find your confidence misplaced. Wild and reckless as I may be to others, you shall find me a steady and perhaps not unwise friend, though it is Alford who says so. I know all the folly of endeavouring to win a warmer interest in your regard, and shall not attempt it ; but you must in return ever look upon me as a brother, for Euston is at times too violent to be a safe counsellor."

"And thank you, my new brother but old friend ;" said she half playfully, though the tear glistened in her eye as she spoke.

There was a short silence till they reached the top of the hill, and then she said : "Now I think of it, suppose you play courteous and invite my aunt. I know she will decline, but the invitation will please her."

"Willingly ; but you will come still."

"Oh yes ! we are no tie on each other ; indeed she often prefers being left. I hope your house is not full, as usual, for I want to have your mother all to myself."

"We have no visitors but a friend of mine, Percy Dormer."

"What ! the person you used to rave about ? till I dreamt a second time there was such a thing in the world as a perfect man."

"The same ; but I rave about him no more, for he positively refused to be introduced to you, and declares he detests heiresses."

"Alas, poor me !"

There was no time for further explanation, as the carriage came up at the moment. The invitation to Mrs. Hargrave was given, and declined, with courtesy on one side, gratified pride on the other ; Helen was handed into her carriage by Alford, and the next moment it drove on.

As he stopped and looked round for his friend, he saw a horseman on the summit of an opposite hill coming quickly in a direction to meet the carriage. "It must be Dormer,"

thought Alford, and he lingered to watch his approach. The horse dashed down that hill and up the next, proving the recklessness or speed of its rider, and met the carriage half way up the ascent. Could he be mistaken? It certainly was Dormer; but he and Miss St. Maur were strangers to each other; yet, as he had nearly passed the carriage, a start and curvet told of some sudden emotion; and, to his utter astonishment, a low and profound bow from Dormer succeeded.

The carriage proceeded rapidly. Dormer stopped his horse, and looked after it, whilst Alford dashed down the hill to learn the meaning of this, to him, strange scene. He reached his friend just as he was in the act of following the carriage.

"No! no! Percy," laying his hand on his arm, "you have had enough of riding alone for one day. Why you look wilder than ever! What is the matter?"

"Nothing! but I must follow that carriage, and stop it."

"What! Percy Dormer! the refined! the lofty! the elegant! turned highwayman. Leetle Paul, or Turpin, or Jonathan Wild! Well, this will make a pretty tale. Let me see, 'Percy Dormer, or the Gentle Bandit.' A romance in three volumes, by ——."

"Let me pass!" said Mr. Dormer, interrupting him, and trying to free himself from the firm but friendly grasp.

"Not I, indeed! those ladies are under my protection, and I cannot think of allowing them to be robbed of their rings and watches."

"Folly!" cried his friend, fretfully and angrily; then recollecting himself he added: "but you can tell me, for I saw you speak to them. Who is the lady in that carriage?"

"The one you bowed to?"

"Of course?"

"Mrs. Hargrave."

"Mrs. Hargrave!" repeated Dormer, laying great stress on the first word, and turning away. "Is she a widow?" he asked again in an earnest voice.

"Ah! sits the wind that way," thought Alford; "since he will not trust me, it shall go hard but I find or make some sport. "Yes, she is a widow," he replied carelessly; and then, marking the sudden pleasure expressed in his friend's manner, he added archly: "and if you feel inclined to woo and wed, I'll be your bridesman; though I never could have believed Percy Dormer would have chosen to be second to any man: *mais chacun à son gout.*"

Man of the world as he was, Mr. Dormer's cheek flushed crimson, whilst he turned his horse's head, and proceeded towards Marston at a brisk pace, to avoid all further conversation on the subject; but Alford, seeing there was some mystery in the affair, was not inclined to let the matter rest; and, as they walked their horses up the next hill, he endeavoured to learn more.

"By the way, Dormer, I fear you must meet this detested heiress, as she comes to us on Monday; but you shall not be introduced."

"There will be plenty to flatter her without my troubling myself," said he, coldly and haughtily. "Besides, I shall be particularly engaged this next week."

"What! riding alone?"

"No!" he replied very sternly.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, I thought it might have been."

There was a silence of some moments, but the hill was a long one, so he began. "Where did you meet this Mrs. Hargrave?" He paused for an answer.

"I saw her at S—" said Dormer at length, mastering his anger and confusion.

"At S— you say. Did you see much of her? or could she have any reason for shunning you? I ask because she refused to visit us, though I urged her, and she knew you were with us."

"Impossible! It cannot be!" burst forth Dormer, surprised, hurt and angry. "She cannot wish to shun me. Her brow spoke confusion but not dislike. She shall, she must meet me! What did she say? how did she look? when she heard my name."

Alford burst into a loud laugh. "Well I never could have believed this possible! I really thought an earthly being was too material for you, and that nothing less aerial than a rainbow could have won you. What will Catherine say? I must gallop to tell her."

Away he went; but, gallop as he would, Dormer was still at his side. A spiked gate, too high for a leap, must be passed through. "Open Sesame!" was useless; the spell was powerless, and Alford was obliged to dismount. Mr. Dormer dismounted also; and when the gate was closed, took his friend's arm and proposed a walk. Alford, revelling in mischief, would have declined the invitation, but his friend's half-earnest, half-haughty look, produced a burst of laughter, during which he allowed himself to be led quietly forward. Neither

spoke, for Alford enjoyed the mischievous pleasure of increasing his friend's awkwardness by his silence; and Dormer felt as if appealing to Alford's forbearance would be beneath his dignity, yet to have his feelings and her name become the subject of jest and merriment was not to be thought of. Too proud to stoop with a good grace he at last said abruptly:

"As my friend, Alford, you will never mention this subject again to me or to another."

"Is concealment a proof of friendship?" said his friend, bending on him an enquiring look.

"Pshaw! I have other things to talk to you about."

"Indeed! then make haste and discuss them, and we will talk about this matter afterwards. Who knows but it may contain the elements of high treason, or murder, or felony, or some such heinous crime; and, as my father would say, 'eternal shame would rest on the eldest son of a peer and a Privy Counsellor, should he fail to sift such a matter to the bottom.' So explain! explain! What, shy about it? Nay, never colour; you are not the first wise man who has lost his heart, and his senses too, to a pretty foot, or a well-turned ankle, or a good jointure. Which doth this gentle dame possess?"

"I tell you," said Dormer, worked up to a passion by this raillery, "It were degradation to think of her, much more to name her, in your presence. Do you think that Percy Dormer would give a second thought to the loveliest face or the finest foot and ankle in Christendom? or that his heart would stoop to court a jointure? As well might you think he would seek to rule for the gauds of pomp or the fawning of slaves. Lovely as she is, others may equal her in the material part of her beauty. Other forms may be as slight, other eyes as deep and blue, other cheeks as rich and downy. But where can you find all these lit up, and sublimed by such a mind? One while soft, timid, shy, gentle, as the dawn of early morning in all its misty loveliness, or the first sweet hopes of childhood's happy years: and then bright as our manhood's brighter dream, before the spirit's blight; glowing and brilliant as the sun-set hour—that time, when hope and memory mingle so wildly sweet together. With just enough of earth to teach us to love, not worship; and yet, so much of heaven, as to refine and purify the thoughts that rest upon her."

"Hear! hear! hear! Hear! hear! hear! One while she is like a misty morning or a child's hoop or top. Which

was it? let me remember! Do repeat it, there is a good fellow! or, perhaps, you will write it down for me. It is the very thing for Miss Juliana Waitman's album. A misty morning and a glowing sunset! Beautiful contrast! I declare, I thought I was listening to the maiden speech of a first classman, praising his college. You really must have written those 'Lines to a Lady' in one of the *Annuals*, beginning—

'Those eyes, sweet lady, glistening through their lashes,
Gleam like the mid-day sun when rain around us splashes.'

But who is this thing of poetry? this woman with a mind so marvellously balanced between earth and heaven? When we young men talk of a woman's mind, we mean a lovely form and a sensitive heart; but, of course, you mean something more. May I presume to enquire if Hargrave is the name this morning's mist bears in this earthly world of ours?"

"You are incorrigible! and I am a fool to heed or answer you," said his friend in a wrathful tone, who had been writhing under the banter. "On! Proclaim my folly! and hold mock at it. I will delay you no longer."

"I thank you; I am in no hurry," said he in a careless tone. "In truth I am half tired of laughing at folly, and have thought sometimes of looking grave at wisdom; but, just now, I think I shall moralize on the blindness of lovers. This Mrs. Hargrave, in my mind, is tolerable, but nothing to make a fuss about; a very respectable-looking lady, but no more. Now, my heiress is worth looking at. I tell you what, you had better not make up your mind till you have seen her; for I will wager my favourite hunter, after having been one hour in her society, you will be for transferring this aerial description from the widow to the heiress. What say you?"

"Hang the heiress!" cried Dormer, in a towering passion.

Alford shrugged his shoulders, in pretended horror, and asked if all her admirers were to share the same fate, as in that case the county would be depopulated.

His friend was too angry to deign a reply, but, mounting his horse, rode on; and Alford, thinking he had carried his raillery too far, apologised and made his peace by promising silence towards Catherine, guidance to Mrs. Hargrave's on Monday, the day after the next, and a sly declaration at the end, that he would be sure and not introduce him to the heiress.

CHAPTER V.

She was a phantom of delight,
 When first she gleamed upon my sight
 A lovely apparition, sent
 To be a moment's ornament.
 Her eyes like stars of twilight fair,
 Like twilight too her dusky hair;
 But all things else about her, drawn
 From May-day and the cheerful dawn.
 A dancing shape—an image gay—
 To haunt—and startle—and way-lay.
 I saw her upon nearer view,
 A spirit, yet a woman too!
 A countenance, in which did meet
 Sweet records, promises as sweet.
 A perfect woman, nobly planned,
 To warm, to comfort, to command;
 And yet a spirit still—and bright
 With something of an angel light.

WORDSWORTH.

Parting day

Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
 With a new colour as it gasps away;
 The last still loveliest, till 'tis gone and all is grey.

BYRON.

THAT Miss St. Maur, instead of Mrs. Hargrave, was the real object of Dormer's panegyric, Alford did not for one moment doubt; but how the mistake had arisen was beyond his comprehension. His love of mischief, not always very justifiably gratified, made him cautious of asking many questions, lest in acquiring knowledge himself, he should likewise enlighten his friend, and thus spoil his own sport.

About two o'clock on Monday, that time having been fixed for the visit to Mrs. Hargrave, Mr. Dormer entered the drawing room at Marston Hall, thinking of the coming meeting, and most heartily weary of the company of his noble host, who, from a sly suggestion of Alford, had insisted on showing him some improvements in his farm. Helen had arrived a short time before, and was too much engaged in an animated conversation with Catherine to notice the opening of the door. Alford, who had insisted on her taking off her bonnet, that he might see the full effect of Dormer's salutation, was seated nearly opposite.

Dormer entered the apartment with an air in which weariness

ness at what had been, and anticipation of what was to be, were equally mingled; and, thinking only of his visit, won his way between *chaises longues*, and ottomans, *fautouils*, and footstools, till he stood beside Alford.

"Have you ordered the horses?" he enquired, quite unconscious of the presence of the ladies.

"Not yet; but, if Miss St. Maur will excuse my leaving her to Catherine's entertainment so soon after her arrival, I will do so directly."

The name of the heiress was no inducement for Dormer to look round, and he pretended to be intent on a newspaper lying on the table, till startled by a sweet and musical voice playfully releasing Alford from the trouble of amusing her, he turned quickly round and beheld before him the lovely being whose charms had rendered him so eloquent two days before.

Surprised at a sight so unexpected, and vexed at Alford's smile, he stood for one minute looking at her with flushing cheek, and in awkward silence; the next, he was by her side, pouring forth in a less dignified and connected strain than was his wont, his pleasure at this meeting: in short, a whole torrent of hopes, fears, apologies, and congratulations. If the unexpected surprise, and the looks of Alford, had confused the gentleman, how could they do less than have the same effect on the lady. When she saw those brilliant eyes fixed full upon her, saying in the plainest manner the most flattering things; and heard him claim her acquaintance with a warmth that would admit of no denial; and thought of the scene with her cousin, and their previous meetings, her confusion became still greater than that of Mr. Dormer; and, for almost the first time in her life, she lost all self-possession, and listened with changing cheek and downcast eyes to all his expressions of pleasure at this meeting.

To Lady Catherine this scene was strange, and, to all appearance, any thing but pleasing; whilst to her brother it afforded great amusement, mixed with some surprise, as even his penetration failed to make the riddle quite clear. Determined to amuse himself still more, without the slightest pity for their confusion, he began to "make confusion worse confounded."

"Why, what is the meaning of all this, Dormer?" looking provokingly from one to the other. On Saturday, you declare you detest heiresses, and positively refused to be introduced to this lady; yet on Monday, you claim her acquaintance with an ardour that will admit of no doubt as to your sincerity."

"What do you mean?" said Mr. Dormer, turning angrily

towards his friend. "You know very well, far from declining an introduction to this lady, that it was my first wish, and that you had promised to take me to her residence to-day."

"I am sorry to contradict, but indeed I know no such thing. I am certain I heard you declare that you would not be introduced to Miss St. Maur; that you detested her, and that she was only fit to be sold to a goldsmith by weight; and, on my urging you farther, you said, 'Hang the heiress!' and favoured me with a most sublime and lover-like description of Mrs. Hargrave; in which you compared her to the mist of the morn, and the glow of the sunset—with just enough of earth to be loved, yet sufficient of heaven to be adored. If you deny all this, then shall I 'doubt truth to be a liar!' Miss St. Maur, you shall judge between us."

The anger and confusion of Dormer, during this *exposé*, might have satisfied a more malicious trickster than his lordship. To have his feelings thus thrown open to the public gaze; to find that he had uttered disparaging things of the only woman who had at all equalled his ideas of what woman should be; to have those things brought against him in her presence; to feel himself an object of ridicule; to read in the eyes of Lady Catherine a malicious pleasure at his confusion; nay, even to fancy a something arch in the look of Miss St. Maur herself: all these were things to wound and gall a proud man: and Mr. Dormer was very proud: too angry and too proud to deign an explanation, since Helen's half smile spoke her in his eyes a partner in the conspiracy. Unfitted by nature and education to conquer raillery with raillery—aware, from experience, that to appeal to Alford's forbearance would be worse than useless—and still retaining sufficient tact to feel the ridicule of giving way to the passion which consumed him—he turned away with a wrathful look, and with considerable difficulty controlled the expression of his rage.

On Helen the effect of Alford's words had been different. Surprise, confusion, soon yielded to a feeling of woman's wounded dignity. Her confusion passed away; and, though she could scarcely refrain from smiling at the charges brought against Mr. Dormer, and his vexation at them, yet her penetration left her little doubt as to the true state of the case; and, feeling for his embarrassment, as well as her own dignity, she considered it high time to put a stop to Alford's merri-
ment.

It is astonishing, considering man's superior control over himself on grand occasions, how much quicker and better a

woman's tact and feeling will enable her to extricate a whole party from embarrassment on minor ones. Men, at least such men as Mr. Dormer, who had been an idol from his birth, are too proud and lofty to turn or be turned. They would face danger with an unblanching cheek ; they are not weak enough to yield an opinion to a laugh ; and yet raillery is death to them : and that, not from their weakness, but from their strength. Accustomed to quell impertinence by one withering look, or the stateliness of their carriage, should some one, with almost more than mortal daring, presume to continue the attack, the proud man feels he has no weapons fit to carry on the pigmy strife. The impetuous burst of indignation that on an occasion worthy of it would appear sublime, would here be only ridiculous. It would be like an elephant waging war with a monkey ; a mailed hero of ancient time, careering with an effeminate dandy of the present ; a steam vessel of a thousand horse power, engaging in a combat with a paltry fishing yawl.

The course through life of a really proud and lofty man, one of your veritable sultans, is a perpetual steeple chase : he will bear down all before him, or perish in the attempt. Fortunately for the more common-place beings who people the earth, there are but few who from nature and situation can enact the sultan, else might crowds be trampled down in the stern chase unnoted and unmourned.

The power of woman is widely different : more accustomed to contradiction, without the brute force that can win her will ; obliged to yield to husbands, brothers, and circumstances ; educated more for indolent enjoyment than active exertion ; shrinking with feminine delicacy from attracting the public gaze ; she wins her way gently and silently through all impediments—rules by her sweetness, and governs by her helplessness. She can meet raillery with raillery as playful ; disarm passion with her smiles ; and, should the chance of war be likely to turn against her, she can shelter herself beneath the woman's dignity, or the capriciousness attributed to her sex. Man is like the steam vessel, holding on its course under bare poles against wind and tide, with all the pride of power. Woman is like one of the beautiful vessels of the R. Y. C. veering, tacking ; her white sails glistening in the sun ; her red burgee floating in the breeze ; shifting her course as wind and tide obstruct her path, yet ever steering for the same desired haven ; and winning her way, if with less swiftmess, with more of beauty and of grace.

Helen had even more than a woman's usual tact ; had been accustomed to encounter Alford from childhood ; and had little doubt one word from her would silence him. Feeling for the awkwardness of the situation in which his fooling had placed Mr. Dormer, she was anxious to relieve him from all further annoyance as soon as possible.

Had she marked his wrathful look, as he turned away ; or could she now have guessed the passion which raged within him, she might have left him to amend his humour as he could ; but, as she had no opportunity of judging of his present mood, and felt she had been in some measure the innocent cause of his annoyance, she hastened to play pacificator.

"Alford," said she, "you appealed to me as judge, and I accept the office. Now, hear your sentence. That you, being the cause of all this mischief, shall forthwith make most humble apologies to Mr. Dormer and myself for your late ill-conduct ; which apologies shall be couched in general terms, to avoid all further discussion. Moreover, you shall bind yourself to keep the peace towards all now present for the space of three months ; shall be banished my presence till dinner time ; and shall be grave and silent for the whole evening. What say you, Mr. Dormer ?" smiling sweetly, "do you think we may venture to be so merciful to such an incorrigible offender ?"

The cloud on his brow passed at the sound of that musical voice ; even Alford was forgiven, and in a moment more he stood beside her.

"Oh most righteous sentence ! a second Daniel come to judgment !" he replied, catching for once her spirit of playfulness.

"Stop," said Alford, "you have heard nothing ; I demanded a fair trial."

"No, you demanded a fair judge, and that you had."

"A pun from Percy Dormer ! Nay then, I yield me to my fate. But first let me explain."

"No explanation is required ;" replied Helen, colouring slightly.

"That is unjust," said Lady Catherine pettishly ; "explain, Alford, by all means : it will be vastly entertaining ; besides, I do not see how you are to blame. In my view, the guilt rests with Mr. Dormer ; though Helen, with her usual magnanimity, seems inclined to pardon him the putting her on a par with old fashioned plate, and only to punish you for repeating it."

"I shrink from no explanation, Lady Catherine Alford," said Mr. Dormer proudly. "Alford knows what I said applied to heiresses in general, not to the one bright exception; and that my remarks were wrung from me by persecution. Why he chose to name Mrs. Hargrave instead of Miss St. Maur, as the lady to whom I bowed, he alone can explain."

Lady Catherine drew back in haughty silence, for she too was an heiress, though on a small scale, and received the remark as personal; but in this she did Mr. Dormer injustice.

"In giving Hargrave instead of St. Maur I acted in perfect innocence, as, believing you unacquainted with Helen, I concluded Mrs. Hargrave must have been the lady to whom you bowed; that I have been equally innocent in the rest of this adventure, I am aware it would be useless to assert before two such prejudiced judges. As you will neither hear me in my defence, nor allow Catherine to plead for me, I can but throw myself on your mercy. Come Helen, remember what your pet Shakspeare says about mercy, and do not banish me from your presence."

"What think you, Mr. Dormer? May we venture on a free pardon?"

"Why, yes! I think even I would be his surety that he could never offend you again."

Helen blushed at the emphasis on the word *you*, and pronounced a full pardon.

"Thanks, noble judge!" said the culprit, bowing low and then adding archly, "But I think Dormer should stand a trial."

"Is this the way our mercy is repaid? You lead your friend into a labyrinth, and then take advantage of his entanglement. We will hear no more of this matter."

The look and tone, though half playful, were sufficient, and Alford was silent.

"What is this matter you will hear no more of?" asked Lady Marston, entering the room at the moment; "has Alford been at his pranks again?"

"It is very hard, mother! there is no mischief done but all think I have some share in it: do pray, Catherine, stand up in my defence, and relate what has passed."

"After my mercy?" said Helen.

"Oh! It was nothing at all," said Catherine bitterly; "but Miss St. Maur and the gentlemen have been playing the first part of 'Much Ado about Nothing,' and the finale will doubtless be enacted hereafter, in a spirit worthy the author."

Lady Marston and Mr. Dormer looked surprised, Alford annoyed, and Helen blushed for the lady and herself.

"You do not state the thing correctly, Catherine," said her brother gaily, to relieve all parties.

"It was 'All's Well that Ends Well,' and I found the play very entertaining," he added archly.

"It may have been sport to you and death to others," said Catherine, as she left the room.

"I am ready now, my dear," said Lady Marston to Helen.

"Where are you going?" inquired her son.

"To my school; and Helen, dear child, goes to assist me."

"Now this is very unfair, taking Helen away when I have scarcely spoken to her; I have half a mind to join the party."

"Agreed, if Helen will be surety for your not disturbing the gravity of the children."

"That will I not, dear madam. Your son is so incorrigible, and presumes so much on our childish friendship and certain pretty speeches he made me the other day, that I see I must assume more dignity, and be Miss St. Maur, instead of Helen."

"Not so," he replied, taking her hand as he spoke, to lead her to the donkey chaise; "let us always be Helen and Alford, and I really will be a good boy: but stop," pausing abruptly, "Dormer will insist on my conducting him to Mrs. Hargrave. Have you any message for your aunt?"

"Yes! that she will be kind enough to detain you till the conclusion of my visit."

"And Dormer also?" looking archly from one to the other.

"That must be at her pleasure. I have nothing to do with Mr. Dormer's movements."

"There Dormer? you may come or go as you please; Miss St. Maur cares no more for you than for Cathy's poodle!"

Mr. Dormer looked displeased, and Helen adjusted her shawl to conceal blush, or smile; which is not known.

"Pity me, Helen," said her ladyship, "for having such a mad son. I wonder how you ever did him the honour of admitting him to your friendship, Mr. Dormer?"

"I have ever lived in hopes he would amend."

"That hope is vain, I am convinced," cried Helen, drawing back and colouring highly at something he had whispered in her ear. "Take my arm, dear lady Marston; and, with your leave, we will forbid all further attendance."

But the gentlemen pleaded hard; their pleadings prevailed,

and they were allowed to hand the ladies to the carriage, Alford playing donkey boy, and in obedience to a whispered command from Helen, making no more allusions to the past.

Wild and reckless as Lord Alford was, there were many redeeming points in the character. The lower classes ever found in him a warm, and, strange to say, a judicious friend: his temper was rarely ruffled, and it was beautiful to see his attention to his mother. Aware that even the gentle motion of a donkey was almost too much for her delicate frame to endure, his whole attention was engaged in taking care that no stone or piece of rough ground should occasion a ruder action: arrived at the school he was equally careful in helping her out, and in placing her in a comfortable arm-chair. The mother's glistening eye spoke her estimation of his attentions, and the son thought if both parents had been like this one, what a different character he might have been.

On ordinary occasions a village school-room would not have been a place calculated to afford much pleasure to either of the gentlemen, yet now, though the visit was by no means short, neither had wished it shorter. The calm, gentle manner of Lady Marston, with her sweet look of patient suffering, contrasted, yet harmonized even in its contrast, with the glowing beauty and witching smiles of Helen; who won the most timid to boldness, and the most silent to speech. The clearness and simplicity of her questions, the patience with which she explained to the stupid, the pleasure with which she listened to the intelligent, and the warm praise she bestowed on the deserving, threw a spell over the labours of the school-room, of which, we fear, such scenes are sometimes destitute; and visitors and visited felt regret when the fear of fatiguing Lady Marston warned them to return.

"You must come and assist me in my school sometimes, dear Helen, for I am seldom able to do much; and Catherine, I am sorry to say, complains the children are so dirty and ugly and stupid, that she cannot bear to attend them."

"Catherine's talents are so great, and she has so many accomplishments, and so much refinement, that one cannot be surprised she should find the village children dirty and stupid; but she is very liberal with her contributions, and we must not expect too much," replied Helen.

Her ladyship felt her kindness, and pressed her hand in return; but sighed deeply, for even the fondness of a mother could not blind her to the defects of her child.

"Yes, Helen!" said Alford gaily, "you and I will attend to the school, for you have quite given me a taste for it; and even Dormer, though a refiner, has decided that the future Mrs. D. may superintend the learning of A B C, provided she resembles you, and never makes an intended visit to the school an excuse for thick leather shoes, cotton stockings, and wearing a two-year old gown."

Dormer bit his lip, for, had his friend possessed the ring of the fairy tale, he could have scarcely defined his feelings more clearly.

"Agreed," said Helen, laughing, and answering only to the first part of the speech, though a sly glance had made her aware of the annoyance its termination had occasioned. "You shall teach the boys, and I the girls."

"No, indeed! we teach together."

"And, 'make confusion worse confounded,' as you did not long since. But the school seems already so well managed that I doubt if our assistance will be required."

"Oh! that is due to Annie Grey."

"To Annie Grey! And who is Annie Grey? for her name alone is a romance."

"So it is," said Alford, answering for his mother, "and Miss Jones would give her ears; and her mother's tongue to boot, for the change: and now I will tell you who Annie Grey is, for she deserves a description. She is the gentlest, the sweetest, the best: a lily of the valley! a violet! a primrose! the extract of a tear! the essence of a sigh! the spirit of an adieu! a dew-drop on a rose!"

"Beautiful! I shall send for an album with an embossed border of lilies, violets, and primroses, and you shall write this in the first page. But I must apply to your mother for more reasonable information, since you only tell me what she is, and not who she is."

"She is the orphan grandchild of the Nortons, has resided with them about two years, and may almost warrant Alford's description. I want to interest you for her, as she needs a friend, and I know your warm heart. Mr. Norton, our vicar, is now so old as to be scarcely able to perform the public duties of his profession, yet is too poor to keep a curate; and Mrs. Norton, from paralysis, is almost helpless. Poor Annie's parents died about three years since at her father's curacy in the north, leaving their child about eight hundred pounds, all their little saving. Though delicate, she never complains, but is all that the most precious child could be to

the Nortons, and as far as is in her power, supplies her grandfather's place in the parish. Poverty and old age prevent his mixing in society, and Annie is so shy she can scarcely be persuaded to go any where. I fancy her lonely life wears on her spirits, and I want you to win her from herself. I know she is afraid of Catherine, but I have taught her to love you."

"Poor thing! to be an orphan, and so young! We must be sisters," said Helen, and the tears stood in her eyes as she thought of her own loss. "When shall I call on her?"

"Suppose you go to-day. Catherine will go with you, I have no doubt, as I heard her say she meant to call."

Lady Catherine agreed to the plan, and escorted by the gentlemen the young ladies set off for Marston Vicarage, with which and its inhabitants Helen was delighted.

Mr. Norton, whom she had known before, was one alive to all the dignity of his profession, cheerfully pious, charitable in pecuniary matters to the utmost of his means, still more charitable in matters of the mind; one of those beautifully simple and single-hearted beings, who win the love and respect of even the most worldly. Annie had much of her grandfather's character. Half child, half woman; with her soft blue eyes; her light curls falling over her fair brow; and her full cheek, that changed its colour with a feeling or a thought; and her small but delicate and fragile figure, she seemed almost to realize our fancies of a being from a higher world. Though shy, she was not awkward, and ere the visit was ended, she had consented to spend some days at Hurlestone, and felt in Helen she had found a new object to love. As they passed through the little garden, gay with innumerable flowers, Lady Catherine remarked an old moss rose tree with only one bud. "Why do you allow that shabby old tree to encumber the ground?" asked she. "Dig it up, and the gardener shall bring you a better one, for your garden is really very neat."

"Thank you, Lady Catherine," said Miss Grey, colouring deeply, and bending over the rose tree; "but I prize that more than any flower at Marston Hall: it was planted by my mother."

"Why it has but one poor blighted flower, child!" remarked her ladyship contemptuously.

"And even that may be gone soon," said Annie sorrowfully, whilst a tear fell on the rose over which she was bending.

"Most likely," said Catherine carelessly.

Miss Grey started, and the colour left her cheeks; the words seemed a confirmation of her half prophecy. Helen saw in

an instant what was passing in her mind. "You are wrong, Catherine," she said, "with a little fresh mould, I have little doubt the bush will soon flourish again. You must let me prescribe for it, my dear Miss Grey," and she took her hand kindly. "I have a passion for moss-roses! And now good bye, for we must not detain you any longer."

"I wonder what the people see in Annie Grey, as they all choose to call her, to like so much?" said Lady Catherine, as they returned home. "A mere stupid, simple, country girl,

'With hair that is lint-white,
And skin that is milk-white.'

Give her red eyes, and she might equal in beauty a French rabbit. The mind seems of the same colour as the hair, cold, and insipid, and only fit to superintend a dairy, a poultry-yard, and a nursery."

"She is young and shy," replied Helen warmly, "and has lived retired; but she is one of the sweetest, most winning beings I ever beheld."

"And you think her beautiful?"

"More than beautiful! I think her almost angelic."

"Stylish?"

"If she has not the style of a woman of fashion, she has at least none of her impertinence," said her brother quickly.

"Oh! is it so? 'I cry your pardon!'" and bowing ironically, she entered the house before he could reply.

"Poor Annie Grey!" remarked his lordship; "I shall not give up your defence from dread of Cathy's taunts. She is much to be pitied."

"To be envied rather," said Dormer warmly, "for she has won Miss St. Maur's love and regard."

Helen was standing alone at an open window, admiring a beautiful sunset, when Mr. Dormer entered from the dining-room. So noiseless was his step, that she knew not he had intruded on her solitude, nor did he wish her to know it. Silent and still he stood beside her, watching her lovely face, and scarcely breathing lest it should disturb her. At that moment, he felt, or thought he felt, that the lowliest lot, if shared with her, would be happiness: the proudest, if unshared with her, but misery!

She sighed, and tears stood in her dark blue eyes. Why that sigh? and why those tears? He looked at her as he would read their cause. A slight noise startled her, she turned hastily round and met his gaze. There was a something so

penetrating, so lustrous, and withal so flattering, that blushing she turned again abruptly to the window ; he stood beside her, and his rich deep voice fell on her ear.

"There is a spell about the evening hour—an enchantment in its glory or in its quietude, which no other time can boast ; it is to me the happiest or the saddest hour in all the day. The cold mist of morning speaks of what will soon be the present, and prompts to exertion. The hero holds his sword with a firmer grasp, and, exulting in the power of his strength, sees in fancy the field of battle won, and hears the shouts of victory : the statesman, glorying in his mighty mind, bursts through the toils of his opposers, and rules all meaner things, his country's pride ! The mid-day heat has something of the languor of satiety ; the unsatisfaction of long possession ; the querulousness of the present. The gloom of night disperses the dreams of day, and whispers of the grave ; or affords time and clearness to calculate coldly the chances and worth of success. It points to the bloody field, the widowed wife, the orphaned child, and dulls the blaze of glory, or it tells of deceitful friends, of early friendships broken, of mean and base supporters, of selfish and intriguing opponents ; and twines the statesman's wreath with thorns. But evening has none of these things ; or all, and a thousand more besides. The mind may trace in all its gorgeous splendour the history of its own glory, setting in brilliant majesty the object of sympathy and of admiration to all kindred souls ; a giant reposing for a time, to rise again in greater strength, and power, and splendour. Yes, for once, perhaps for twice, the mind may have these thoughts, and then it can never dream such things again ; at other times, it only seems to mock at all these things. Long dark shadows fall over the brightest hues ; all looks weary—a chill creeps over the spirit, and the wreath of glory withers beneath its touch. Then for its moment of delight, if such it can be called, what is it ? The intensity of feeling, the agonized delight, the passionate tenderness with which we bend above the dead, vowing our hearts to theirs."

He paused. Helen, won by his passionate tones, had drank in every word, had watched every feature expand, the whole face take a new character, and even when he had ceased, she withdrew not her eyes, but stood expecting him to continue. There was a strong expression of surprise on her countenance, which his dread of being ridiculous made him interpret wrongfully. The character of his countenance changed instantly, and a slight smile of self derision curled his lip.

"I beg your pardon, Miss St. Maur, for wearying you with this rhapsody. I saw a tear, and I heard a sigh; but it seems I read such matters ill. I forgot, for a moment, that the sexes are not more different in their beauties than in their thoughts."

There was a hauteur in his tone that piqued Helen, though she scarcely knew why.

"May not the difference of education have almost as much to do with the difference of feeling as sex itself?" she asked; "and is it not, in some instances, rather a difference in degree than in substance? I could admire and understand your description, though I did not quite agree with you."

"I had no right to expect you should: sighs and tears have as many objects as there are objects to gratify them. The child cries for its play-things; the maiden weeps—but no!" he added, checking himself, her sweet smile rebuking his churlishness,—“the maiden should weep for nothing, for all things should be given her; her sighs and tears should only be for others.”

"Are maidens so very selfish, then, that you think to lighten their sorrow by bidding them weep for others rather than themselves? And talk not of giving us every thing; I never yet heard a gentleman say that ladies should have all they desire? but what that man was the veriest tyrant in existence."

"Can you dread a tyrant?"

"Not much;" and she turned away from his gaze as she spoke. "Alford has the impertinence to say I could out-Herod Herod. But you evade my question. Do you deem us so very selfish?"

"I spoke of our wishes, not of your merits. We would save you from all other griefs, that your tears might flow only for us. We alone would awaken anxiety; thus the selfishness rests not with you but with us."

"And you would take care the well of our affections should not stagnate. There is more of gallantry than sincerity in your answer, I suspect. And now one question more. We are to have all for which we wish; what if we wish for power?"

"That cannot be: none wish for what they have. You would but weary with excess."

His complimentary tone displeased her; it neither suited the loftiness of her own character, or what she had imagined of his, and she proceeded more gravely.

"Will you define our power?"

"I feel it!"

"I ask in earnestness, and am answered in levity ; but you judged rightly in thinking the truth would be distasteful. I will define our boasted power. It is to win flattery and attention by a bright eye, a glowing cheek, a graceful form—to lose both when these things fade. If we resent compliments, held churlish ; if we accept them, frivolous and vain. Followed, courted, flattered, while young, rich, and beautiful ; despised and unnoticed when old, poor, and plain ; and rarely in our brightest hours deemed worthy of participating in the high things and noble dreams of men. Such is, in most instances, our power ; ever frail, fleeting, evanescent, and based on unworthy sentiments !"

He was surprised : there was an indignant force in her language, and a depth in her tone, which showed she had read his thoughts. True, he had talked of her mind, but then, as Alford said, what do men generally mean by talking of the mind of a beautiful woman ? If she have animation and feeling, so as to amuse by the one and flatter by the other, then she has mind, and quite as much as most people desire. Weak men dread a superior ; wise men like a play-thing ; not quite a fool perhaps, but certainly not very wise. We speak of the majority, and appeal to experience to acquit us of falsehood. What startled him most was the quickness with which she had penetrated his estimate of women ; and he doubted if he understood the lovely being before him. When next he spoke it was with more of respect and less of gallantry.

"Such a definition is unjust to all. If beauty win us, it is because we judge of the jewels contained within the casket, by the exquisite workmanship lavished on the exterior. It is the diamond of the mind to which we pay our homage, through the fretted beauty of its case."

"Oh ! the marvellously new discoveries that are made every hour !" and she raised her hands in astonishment.

"There is no deceiving that woman," thought Dormer : "now for a last effort."

"May we never see and own an error ? When the real pole-star rises on our view, may we not worship it, take it for our guide, though, during the days of our delusion, we bowed before some meaner thing ?"

Helen's laughing eyes were turned full upon him, and so filled were they with their own archness, that, for once, they stood the deep gaze of his unblenchingly. There needed no words, and she spoke none ; but, as she again turned from

him, a shade passed over her features. It was regret that he should have stooped to deceitful compliments, but he read it as displeasure; and he was angry with himself at being, for the first time in his life, ashamed to avow his low estimate of female understanding, and angry with her for discovering his feelings.

"Miss St. Maur, I have offended you," he said with a mixture of pride and impetuosity. "Remember! it is no easy thing to throw off the prejudices of years; it is no slight triumph to overthrow them."

"It is a task you have not accomplished, Mr. Dormer; it is a triumph I neither expect or desire. We will change the conversation, if you please. I am in no mood to run a tilt for the wisdom of the sex; the evening is too peaceful for such warlike deeds."

"I will respect your wishes, though I cannot own myself defeated."

"I never expected that," she said archly, and then added, to change the subject:—"Let us talk of the beautiful skies of Italy. Tell me, are they really so much more beautiful than ours? I fancy I should think they wanted variety."

He thought of wandering over Italy with Helen by his side, and forgot all his displeasure at her rebukes.

"You must pardon my disobedience, and allow me to describe an evening in England, more beautiful, in my eyes, than any I ever beheld even in *la belle Italie*. It was the first time I saw you."

"Oh! I pray you to forget that meeting!" half-blushing half-laughing; "or I shall be obliged to apologize for Bran and myself too."

"It was not very flattering certainly," returning her laugh with perfect good-humour, "to be taken either for a hedgehog or a starveling oat; but I suspect I ought to apologize for having frightened you, and I sought you for that purpose, though in vain. But it is not of that evening I mean to speak. I had seen you twice before. Do you remember an evening at —, when the rain forced you to take shelter in a cottage? It was then I first beheld you; bending over the sick-bed of the old grand-mother, and soothing her querulous complaints; stilling the shrill cries of the sickly baby; or assisting the elder child to make up the fire, and breathing hope into the heart of the fainting mother. That scene can never be forgotten."

"I remember the evening perfectly; but had no idea our

acquaintance had commenced so early. Where had you found the magic belt to make you invisible, for I never suspected I had a spectator ; and where was your gallantry that you did not offer to assist. What with the outrageous merriment of the children at my inefficient blowing, and the wetness of the wood, I thought the fire would never have kindled."

"I was in an out-house adjoining, in which the shower had induced me to seek shelter, and through a chink in the wall, watched your charitable exertions, so selfishly lost in admiration that I could not make up my mind to break the spell by offering assistance. Before the rain had ceased your carriage drove up. I hastened from my retreat to learn your name, but in my hurry fell over a faggot, and when I reached the door the carriage was out of sight. I made inquiries that night, but could learn nothing ; and the next morning urgent business obliged me to proceed to London. Once again I saw you, and it seemed as if some act of kindness was ever to mark our interviews. As my friend Tyrrel was driving me through a small town in Dorsetshire, a child, in crossing the road, fell just before the horses. Tyrrel was attending to something else, and the child might have perished, had not you sprung forward and snatched the little thing almost from under the horse's feet. I just caught your look of delight as you gave the child to its mother ; met your glance of reproach at our apparently unfeeling conduct ; and then the horses becoming unmanageable, set off at full speed, and I saw you no more. The next day I could hear nothing concerning you. At length I gave up all hopes of meeting you again ; yet still you lived in my thoughts. Judge then of my pleasure at seeing you in the church-yard. Pardon me when I own I had been watching you some time, with what feelings I cannot—dare not say. How you escaped my search I know not, for it was night ere I gave up the hope of finding you. I had been so unsuccessful in my former inquiries, I decided on making none now, but to haunt the spot. The next day it was my happiness to be of service to you. Perhaps my looks and words told my pleasure too strongly, for you seemed anxious to dismiss me, and I thought your manner cold ; but all conduct must have seemed so, compared to my own feelings. The questions of a meddlesome woman prevented my inquiries, and my insisting to ride alone, that I might again seek you, delayed my introduction till to-day. Shall I make an apology for my inadvertent words to Alford, or have you forgiven them ?"

"What if I never thought of them at all?" she said playfully, to hide the confusion this explanation had occasioned. "But some apology you do owe me. I asked you to tell me of Italian skies, and you have only told me of myself. Now look at those beautiful clouds just tinged with the glow of sunset, and wonder how we could think of aught beside. Are they not soft and lovely as the memories of those we have loved and lost. And then look at that gorgeous pile of clouds towards which they are moving, as though to teach us, sorrow for the loss of those we loved should be swallowed up in the bright hope of a re-union. Look, look at those changing clouds, each change more lovely than the last; now purple, and now crimson, mocking at the works of mortal hands; then turn to the calm serenity of the east, from whence all clouds have passed away, as though preparing for a purer and brighter dawn. As all those vapours crowding to the west increase the glory of the sunset hour, so do trials sustained, and temptations overcome, add lustre to the departure of the pious; even the shadows deepening round should please, not chill. Do they not speak of peace and calm? You must love such an evening as this, Mr. Dormer? I am sure you do."

To have failed loving any thing for which she had thus pleaded, would have been impossible; and his looks, and a few low words, told her so. He had gazed on her glowing cheek, and listened to her soft voice, rendered more touching by feeling, till every thing but the beautiful enthusiast was forgotten; and he began to think that woman might sympathise even with his high hopes. But whether she could or not, his desire to win Helen was still the same. They were silent for some time, she watching the clouds, and he her; when the entrance of the rest of the party disturbed their *tête à tête*.

"Catherine," said Lord Marston to his daughter, as she sat at the tea-table feeding her poodle with creamed and sugared toast, "I should think it might be possible to prevent your dog from entering the library; at least, I should imagine you might succeed if you tried it."

"I really never trouble about it," replied her Ladyship, carelessly.

"Then I wish you would trouble about it," said her father sharply, annoyed into a more decided style of speech.

"If you would keep the doors shut Tourment could not enter; and yet that would be rather hard upon him if he have a taste for study; but I hope he is not going to turn politician, they are so prosy or so fiery."

"Catherine, you are intolerable," remarked the Earl, angrily. "I tell you Tourment has done me more mischief than the value of the whole race of dogs and puppies could repair."

"Indeed!" said she, looking most provokingly stupid. "Do you hear that?" turning to her brother and his friend. "*Pauvre* Tourment! what has he done? Devoured Magna Charta? or digested Machiavel?"

"Worse, Lady Catherine Alford. He has upset the ink over every thing, and thrown down the bursts of the immortal Pitt and Fox and Windham and Sheridan," said he, pompously.

"Horrid little wretch! inked your paws, I dare say! Let me see;" and she examined each minutely. "Only see, papa, what a clever little animal; he has not a spot of ink about him."

"Catherine," said his Lordship, still more angrily, provoked by her *nonchalance* at the overthrow of the statesmen, "if you will not keep your dog out of the library he shall quit Marston Hall; nothing is safe from him."

"I was thinking of taking lodgings for him at Brighton, for he is nervous, poor fellow! and requires sea-bathing; but when did Tourment do all this mischief? and are you quite sure he is the culprit?"

"None but yourself could doubt it. I heard a rush as of something escaping from the window, and entered the room just in time to see my valuable busts fall to the ground."

"Then is Tourment innocent, for he was in my dressing-room the whole of the day."

"Impossible! how else could it have happened?"

"Perhaps Mr. Dormer did it," said she, looking simple.

The stupid simplicity of her look and tone, joined to the idea of the stately Mr. Dormer having a hand in mischief, was irresistible, and Helen turned away to conceal her merriment; as she did so, she caught a look from Alford which revealed to her the real criminal. The accused made no reply, and did not deign to look conscious of having been alluded to, whilst Lord Marston appeared horrified at such a charge having been brought against his distinguished guest, a member of Parliament, and the heir of an ancient earldom.

"I cannot imagine, Catherine—indeed it is impossible to understand—what can have induced you to think such a thing possible;" for that she did not think it possible never entered his mind. "Really, Lady Catherine, you should be

more cautious in what you say ; I am sure it is impossible—nay, I am convinced it is quite out of the question—that Mr. Dormer could have known any thing about it !” and then turning to his guest, he favoured him with a long and tedious apology for the suspicions of his daughter, mingled with conjectures as to the real culprit, and ended by appealing to Alford, and half insinuating a doubt as to his innocence.

“It is most extraordinary,” said his son, with difficulty restraining his laughter. “When I left the library, just before you entered, Pitt and Fox were looking very amicably at each other from their respective pedestals. Do you think it can portend any unexpected political movement ?”

“I am half inclined to fear,—that is, I have some idea, some doubts on the subject. There seems to have been some slight indications of a feeling approaching to a wish for a little change in some of the German States ; and I have heard it whispered that Lord A. has been smiled on a little,—a very little less graciously in certain quarters. Common minds see nothing in these things, and call them trifles, and little effervescences, but the sage and observing see these things differently ;” and his Lordship endeavoured to look Wisdom personified. “Oh ! you allude to Schmilscothe and Glutuphecher, persuading the German students to pour out the blood of the obnoxious Professors as libations to the Goddess of Liberty, with magical incantations ; and then unite with the Carbonari, the Constitutionals, the Liberals, and the Radicals, in abolishing all titles of nobility and rights of property, and establishing one universal republic.”

“Is this possible ? Where did you see this ?” inquired his Lordship in anxious and dreadful alarm. “It is quite new to me.” It could not be otherwise.

“I do not recollect who told me,” said his son gravely and calmly.

“Can it be true ? Do they venture to declare their infamous intentions so openly ? I should think,—that is, I should imagine,—but I have not thought much on the subject,—that something should be done instantly. Perhaps have the Radicals watched. I will write to Lord D. on the subject. The times are fearful to all thinking men ; for the respect for ancient institutions is giving place to admiration for traitors and demagogues ; and I hear that Old Sarum has been attacked, and the frowns of his most gracious Majesty been lightly spoken of. Who did you say headed the gang ?”

Again Alford pronounced the unpronounceable names in a

manner that, whilst it convinced his Lordship the pronunciation was correct, left him no hope of imitating it.

"Do, pray, recollect where you heard it; or perhaps you read it. Was it in the Times?"

"No; I am sure it was not in the Times, nor the Courier, nor the Morning Post, nor the Globe. Perhaps I heard it. I never do recollect about these things, you know."

"It really is very provoking, Alford; you never recollect any thing of importance."

"No," replied his son, yawning; "the people tell such lies about politics I make a point of never attending to any thing of the sort."

"Have you seen or heard any of this fearful report, Mr. Dormer; you understand the importance of these matters;" looking reproachfully at Alford.

Dormer, was obliged to confess his utter ignorance, and the Earl to wait till the next day's papers for further information.

Helen alone pitied his distress, and to relieve him proposed chess, knowing it to be a game in which he thought he excelled. Mr. Dormer considered she showed great want of taste in not preferring his conversation, and accustomed to adulation felt a little piqued; had he known how much she would have preferred a *tête-à-tête* with him, he would have more properly appreciated her self-denial, and better understood her character. Whether chess was really invented at the siege of Troy, as some pretend, must be left to the decision of antiquaries; at any rate, the present game seemed likely to last nearly as long as that celebrated tale. What with his lordship's veneration for the king; his making his subjects crowd in all due loyalty around him; and all being as doubtful and slow in their movements as the Earl himself, the game advanced but slowly; so slowly, indeed, that Helen's thoughts wandered to other things, and her antagonist thought himself sure of victory. Alford had left the room unperceived—Catherine reclined on a sofa—Lady Marston had retired as usual—and Mr. Dormer had taken a seat at a little distance, and read, or pretended to read.

"Check to your king," said his lordship, moving a bishop after twenty minutes' deliberation, in a tone in which triumph at his success, and awe at such treason to his majesty, were strongly blended. Helen started, and found her inattention had given her adversary a chance of winning more easily than she had intended.

"If you please, my lord," said a servant, "Richard Tims

is come to speak to your lordship about Robert Neale and some poachers."

"His lordship hesitated; but the desire of catching Robert Neale and some poachers conquered; and, ordering the servant to show Richard Tims into the study, he left the room, after a wearisome apology to Helen, in which all the duties of a magistrate were enumerated.

"Ten to one on Magistrate against Gambler!" cried Alford, stepping from behind a screen. "Now, Helen, what do you not owe me for saving you from this interminable game? or, rather, from being conquered?" glancing over the board.

"Why? is Richard Tims a connection of your German friends?"

"No! not quite so bad as that!" laughing at her arch look. "I only hinted to Tims that his tale should be told immediately, and every particular clearly detailed; and Tims, I know, will profit by the hint. But how came you to discover me? I verily believe Satan himself could not deceive you."

"Do you mean to place yourself on a par with that renowned and respectable gentleman?"

"By no means lady fair; but I had piqued myself on playing the part so admirably, that—"

"Was the deceiving and alarming your father by a falsehood a thing on which to pique yourself?"

"Not quite a falsehood! I kept clear of that."

"It was implied if not asserted, and that is a very nice distinction."

"Well, but how else could I get out of the scrape about Pitt and Fox? the former of whom I hate whilst pursuing, and the latter pursue without hating."

"See the usual consequences of one error; a second is committed to hide the first. You have now two scrapes to get out of instead of one. What will you say when the papers omit all mention of your German plot?"

"Will you not assist me? Do help me this once, and I will be good for the future. Pray do!" and he assumed such a doleful look, that Helen could not forbear laughing, though she shook her head reproachfully.

"How can you guide and advise me, when you cannot guide yourself?"

"Well, Helen, do not look so reproachfully! It is very wrong, and I really will try to mend. If you were always with me I am sure I should be better."

"I fear not; but we will see what can be done, provided you hint no more falsehoods."

"Thanks without number, lady mine; and now, as a proof of your forgiveness, sing to me. You will be free for an hour at least." And he led her to the piano.

"I wish you two would make up your lover's quarrels a little more quietly," said Lady Catherine, yawning. "You have disturbed a most delicious slumber, and roused Mr. Dormer from his studies. Pray what are the fashions for the next month? as I see you have been studying Townshend."

"Percy Dormer studying the fashions! Impossible!" said Alford; "and yet it is," glancing over his shoulder. "What punishment does he not deserve for studying the semblances, when such lovely personifications are before him."

"I must thank you, Helen, for winning me a compliment from my brother."

"Alford assures me he never compliments," said Helen archly.

"I cannot compliment you."

"Admirable! Take care you do not teach me impertinence."

"I should be proud to be your instructor in any thing."

"A second edition of the 'Lover turned Tutor,'" said Catherine, glancing at Dormer; but who concealed his face from her observation.

"No!" replied Alford laughing, "the hind that would be mated with a lion, must die for love. Helen knows I do not aspire so high. Viscountess Alford must be,

'A being not too bright, or good,
For human nature's daily food;'

or she might have cause to blush for her lord, and some others," looking at his sister. "But hush, 'My Delia sings! and sings of love!' Leave the fashions, Dormer, and come and turn over the leaves, that I may resign myself to the delirium of sweet sounds." Mr. Dormer advanced slowly, not as if in obedience to the command, but as though it was his will and pleasure so to do.

"Do not trouble yourself," said Helen; "I can turn the leaves for myself, and Alford does not deserve to be obeyed."

The smile, the tone, dispelled his discontent, and kept him chained to her side; now listening to her rich sweet voice as she sung song after song to please her capricious commander; and now taking his part in their animated conversation.

"What think you of that!" whispered Alford, throwing himself on the sofa by his sister, and turning her attention to Percy and Helen, who were deeply engaged in conversation.

Looking at them through her glass, for a moment, she replied loud enough to be heard in all parts of the room, "I think, as you said just now, 'The hind that would be mated with a lion, should die for love.' Do not you think so, Helen?"

"I have not thought about it, since Alford did me the honour to account me a lion," she replied calmly.

"We bow with deference to your experience on the subject," said Dormer with bitterness, alluding to some old reported love tale.

The random shaft struck home; her weapons had recoiled upon herself; and, despite her usual self-command, she coloured.

It was long ere Lord Marston returned; and during his absence Alford or Tourment had displaced the chessmen; but, as Helen owned herself nearly conquered, he was not very particular in his inquiries.

CHAPTER VI.

The storm may hush, and the lightning stay,
And the sea become serene,
But the early morn's returning ray
Shews where that storm has been;
And there lies a wreck on the breakers cast,
Marking the spot where the storm has past.

And the storm of the mind is full as strong,
It leaves as deep a print;
It marks the face as it moves along,
And stamps it in passion's mint;
As the dash of the billows' sparkling play
Shews where the rough rock lies;
So the lines of the human face betray
Each pang which the spirit tries.
The harder the contest, the firmer the oak:
The wider the waste, the deeper the stroke.

L'orgueil est un mendicant qui crie aussi haut que le besoin, qui est infiniment plus insatiable.

"WILL you ride over to Hurlestone with me this morning, Catherine?" said Helen.

"What, home-sick already? Come here on Monday, and want to ride over on Thursday. What can you want? Do not the gentlemen make your visit here agreeable. I am sure I thought Mr. Dormer and Alford had done their best, but perhaps you are tired of them, as the former, at least, has never allowed you one moment to yourself since your arrival. Gentlemen," said she, as they entered the room, "Miss St. Maur is weary of you, and has announced her desire of seeking one quiet hour in her native woods, as you never leave her alone one moment. Ah, you may well look surprised! but there is no accounting for the fancies of an heiress."

"If you would depend on your recollection rather than on your imagination when speaking of me, Catherine, I should be obliged to you. Your brother and Mr. Dormer will do me the justice to believe I never thought or said any thing of the sort. I wish to see my aunt and my steward on business; but would by no means force you to accompany me. Alford, will you order my horse and groom?"

"It is of no use to be angry with me, Helen; you know I always take my own course."

"I wish you would take a wiser and a better one," said her mother with a sigh, adding, "if not particularly inconvenient, you should accompany Helen, and make my apologies to Mrs. Hargrave."

"Make me your deputy, dear mother," said Alford.

"No! that cannot be! you know you are engaged to go with Lord Marston on some county business."

"Oh! now I understand your conduct, Helen."

"Your understanding on most occasions is unimpeachable, Catherine; but, if you choose to accompany me, you will find my appointment for to-day was made last week."

"Well, don't look so grave, and I will do the polite to Mrs. Hargrave; but you must not expect apologies, I never make them."

"I have learned not to expect some things; and to take others as they are," said Helen good naturedly, though hurt at what had passed.

"Will you not invite us to Hurlestone?" enquired Alford; "the county business is deferred till to-morrow."

"Pardon me," said she gravely; "I have already laid too heavy a tax on your politeness; the last two days must have wearied you of being my escort," and she left the room as she spoke.

"Thanks to you, Catherine : you never were fond of Helen, and care little how you displease her."

"It is your turn to scold now, Mr. Dormer ; and then I shall have received blame from every one," said Lady Catherine, turning towards him, with apparent indifference. "Out with it ! Let the thunder but equal the lightning, and I shall be stunned."

"The lightning has no power on the blind, or the thunder on the deaf," replied he angrily.

"That is," said Alford, "none so deaf as those that wont hear."

"Very sublime ! and thank you for explaining it, lest I should not have understood," courtesying as she spoke. "I suppose, in return, I must issue my commands for your attendance : enough for Helen that it is my will."

"I have desired the gentlemen to go with us," said Catherine, as they mounted ; "and it is of no use disputing the point. I was too much afraid of a lecture on the proprieties to venture on a *tête-à-tête* ; besides, Mr. Dormer was in such a sublime mood I thought it a pity it should be wasted."

"If I do not dispute the point, Catherine, it is scarcely out of courtesy to you."

"I am fully aware of that ;" putting her horse into canter as she spoke.

On this day, as well as on the two preceding, Lady Catherine appeared out of humour, and either to hide it from her guests, or from some other cause, she remained by Alford's side. At first, Helen had tried to induce her to join in the conversation, but the difficulty of the attempt, joined to the charms of Dormer's eloquence, caused the cessation of her efforts.

As they passed through the village, it was delightful to see the pleasure with which all recognized our heroine. Even Dormer's accents fell unheeded on her ear, as she spoke kindly to the present or enquired after the absent ; and, what was still more marvellous, he did not quarrel with her inattention.

"What a delight it must be to you, Helen," remarked Catherine, "that the eccentricity or madness of your rector, Mr. Woodly, has induced him to confine his clerical duties to the mere Sunday service ; since you can manage the parish now in your own way."

"Do not talk lightly of such a serious thing. It is great distress to me, and I have several times offered, though in

vain, to provide a curate : my humble endeavours ill supply the want of an earnest minister."

Catherine had, for once, the good sense to be silent.

"Oh ! how is Bran ?" said Alford. "I ask a thousand pardons for having forgotten him."

"So I should think ; but here he comes to answer for himself ;" and in a few moments he was bounding round her in every direction. "Down, dog !" cried Mr. Dormer angrily, provoked at his having interrupted an interesting conversation, and making a cut at him with his whip.

The dog felt the whip, looked fiercely at him, and then up in Helen's face ; she understood the appeal, for Dormer's frown and action were not lost upon her.

"Be quiet, my own pet !" and the dog was quiet in a moment. "I am sorry Bran was troublesome to you, Mr. Dormer ; but he is accustomed to be ruled by kindness, not by blows."

He bit his lips at the rebuke, and dared not trust himself to speak.

"Helen is a riddle not easily read," remarked Catherine to her brother. "She would sacrifice herself to her lover ; and then sacrifice him to her dog."

"What sacrifice would there be in wedding Dormer ?"

"The sacrifice of the dove to the hawk ; of the lamb to the lion."

"You are prejudiced ; Dormer is even more noble than hawk or lion, and Helen has sense and prudence joined to her sweet temper. Remember, too, my sage sister, hawks may be lured, and lions tamed."

"Certainly !

'A merlin small she held upon her hand,
With hood and jesses galantlie bedight ;
But little did he need, or hood or band,
Could he but gaze on her, full safe were he from flight.'

"Very pretty in poetry, but rather melancholy in practice, and Helen has a heart that can break : *mais nous verrons*."

As they dismounted Helen scarcely availed herself of Mr. Dormer's rather sullenly offered assistance, and to avoid any conversation, till they were joined by the rest of the party, busied herself in caressing her handsome favourite.

"I will lead the way," said Alford, advancing, "and I hope you have ordered a splendid *dejeuner à la fourchette*, as the papers have it, for I have an idea I am hungry. Come, Bran ! my fine fellow ! come along !"

"Oh! pray come in dog!" said Mr. Dormer in no very amiable tone! "you need not fear me; I shall not again endeavour to keep you from your mistress."

But the dog still stood outside the door, looking at Helen with an appealing look, yet not venturing to come in.

"I doubt if Bran would fear you, if you made the attempt; but he knows he never enters the house," and she stepped back, and shut the door unaided by Dormer.

"I am amazed, Miss St. Maur. I thought Bran was such a favourite that his privileges were unbounded."

"You do not understand me, Mr. Dormer: even my greatest favourites must be restrained within due bounds. Bran would be an uncouth visitor for a drawing-room; and I do not acknowledge, at least to its full extent, that love makes us blind."

The flood of passion rushed to cheek and brow, as, afraid of trusting himself to speak, he bowed with ironical humility. Neither these or his flashing eye and curled lip, were unmarked by Helen, and for one instant her cheek paled as she gazed at his fierce anger; the next it almost equalled the crimson flush of his, and deeply hurt and offended at the interpretation she saw he had put upon her words, she passed with a cold and haughty mien, saying as she did so:

"Allow me to show you the way, Mr. Dormer; your friends wait you in the drawing-room."

He followed her without speaking, but with a demeanour so fierce, that Mrs. Hargrave appeared quite alarmed at the introduction; whilst Alford wondered, and Catherine, as she looked on the still glowing cheeks of both, whispered to Helen, "Have you been boxing Mr. Dormer's ears, or has there been a more gentle salutation? Mrs. Hargrave has almost wondered us old at your c'e'ay."

The whisper was, perhaps purposely, rather loud, and Helen fancied it had reached the gentleman's ears, to judge from the look he cast upon them as he strode towards the window. Whatever might be her feelings at this impertinent speech, she was aware to show distress would be to tempt Catherine to increase it, so she answered her only by a reproving look; and turning to Alford, begged he would ring the bell and order his *dejeuner à la fourchette*.

The bell was rung; a magnificent *dejeuner* ordered by the laughing Alford; and, principally through his exertions, an animated conversation maintained, till refreshments were announced in the dining-room.

"Come! Mrs. Hargrave, let me hand you in;" said Alford, and the old lady, pleased with his attention, forgot her alarm of his friend.

"Mr. Dormer, will you hand Lady Catherine?" said Helen, coldly.

It was a command rather than a request, and he felt intended to prevent his becoming her escort. A meaner spirit might have rebelled, but he was too proud to be petty; and too much a man-of-the-world to be rude, except when the fit of passion was full upon him.

"Permit me to offer you the other arm, Miss St. Maur: it were uncourteous to leave you unattended in your own house."

Surprised at conduct so unexpected, Helen hesitated an instant; then considering something was due to him as her guest, she took the proffered arm.

"The atmosphere looks rather dark and threatening," said Lady Catherine, as they passed a window. "Do you think we shall have thunder?" looking rather maliciously from one to the other of her companions.

"Thunder and lightning both," cried Mr. Dormer, provoked beyond all control. "Let your ladyship dread the storm."

"La! Mr. Dormer, you don't say so!" assuming a look of stupid terror. "Then I will ask Alford to go home directly;" and away she galloped through the hall, singing "Oh, Mr. G. Oh, Mr. G."

By no means desirous of a *tête-à-tête* after what had passed, and in Mr. Dormer's present mood, Helen galloped after her friend; saying, "she really must plead with Alford against an instant departure."

"Catherine," whispered she, as they entered the room together, "if you have one good feeling left, leave Mr. Dormer in peace!"

"A most complimentary adjuration truly! but I really cannot listen to it, my dear; I provoke Mr. Dormer on principle, that you may know what you have to expect."

"I ought to thank you for your disinterested kindness," colouring deeply, "but I should think the exhibition might take place with greater propriety in any other house than mine, where common politeness demands I should be more courteous than elsewhere."

"So it would," said Catherine, suddenly changing her mind: "so I will wait till our ride has recommenced: unless indeed you should provoke me by being too courteous."

"No situation, it appears, Lady Catherine Alford, can be

depended on as a shield against your insults. You are at liberty to act as you please."

"Now will I spare him and you too, at least for the present, for the proud dignity of that speech. I am better and worse than they think me," and she pressed Helen's hand.

Miss St. Maur's hostess was perfect. Mr. Dormer's wishes were foreseen and supplied; but there was a proud courtesy in her manner towards him, that shewed she only wanted more fitting opportunity to prove her displeasure.

"Perhaps Mr. Dormer would like to see the pictures and the gardens? Will you be kind enough to show them, aunt; or shall I depute Alford?"

"I will go," said Mrs. Hargrave.

"Thank you, aunt; and now to business with my steward."

When Helen rejoined the party, they had again assembled in the dining-room. Catherine was for once making herself agreeable to Mrs. Hargrave. Dormer, still in ill humour, was pretending to examine a picture, and Alford was throwing eatable after eatable out of the window to Bran, who seemed by no means displeased with the amusement.

"Your dog is half starved, Helen; he has already devoured a whole chicken, with a due proportion of bread, (for I was very particular about that,) and a dozen tarts; yet is ready for more."

"Surely you cannot have been giving him such things!"

"Surely I have; though Dormer refused to hand the dish, and abused pampered favourites. Love me, love my dog; that is the ground I stand upon."

All things considered, this was rather a *mal-a-propos* speech, and Catherine fully enjoyed it.

"Mr. Dormer acted judiciously," replied Helen, calmly; "and I dislike pampered favourites as much as he can do. Love may lose half its value by being injudicious, and I doubt if the housekeeper will much approve of the destination of her tarts; besides, Bran is not accustomed to eat what the sick would be glad of."

"Oh, nonsense! he shall have these three, and finish the dish."

"Indeed he must not. My credit is at stake, and my fondness for the dog evil spoken of."

She took the dish from his hands as she spoke, and placed it on the table.

"Now, Catherine, I am at your service, to escort you whither you please."

"Then, if you have finished your strictures on pampered favourites, the which shall be duly repeated to Tourment, I think we had better return, lest we should be favoured with the predicted storm, for it still looks threatening, and I am nervous."

"As you please; you know me too well to think I alluded to Tourment." I am going to shut up Bran, and will order the horses."

"Could you not allow a servant to do that, Miss St. Maur?" inquired Mr. Dormer, as he and Alford accompanied her.

"My fondness for Bran has won from him a more perfect obedience than he will show to another. If I shut him up he will understand at once he is not to go; were another to do it, he might be inclined to dispute the point, or at least fret about it."

He said nothing, but immediately after she saw him with pleasure attempt to pat the dog. But Bran was not to be coaxed, and looked surly; though he fondled on Alford immediately after. Mr. Dormer ceased his endeavours, and looked prouder than ever.

On their return, Helen, to prevent all conversation with Dormer, contrived to ride between Catherine and her brother, and to engage the former in an earnest conversation.

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agly;"

and Helen's plans might hope no better fate. Just as they reached the village the clouds, which had darkened the natural atmosphere as much as passion had obscured the mental, burst over their heads.

"To the Jones's," cried Alford, seizing Helen's bridle.

The shower promised to be heavy—Alford was peremptory—indeed, there was no time to dispute, and within five minutes they were all safely housed in Eglantine Cottage, the flurried maid having ushered them into the best parlour.

In a room about fourteen feet square, were crowded toys, trifles, and trumpery of every description. Alum baskets of every colour imaginable and unimaginable, filled with artificial flowers, whose rather faded hues looked sentimental, ornamented the chimney-piece, and some of the tables, interspersed with small figures of Paul Pry, Buy a Broom, and German dolls in the full splendours of imbecilles, oreilles d'éliphans, volans, biais, and bérets, supported and flanked by

allumettieres, stuffed with various coloured paper contortions. On a small table in a corner stood

"Lillies and roses and non-smelling posies,"

of wax-work, vis-a-vised by a Bazaar group; the minuteness of whose decorations ever excited the admiration of equally minute minds.

"For still the wonder grew,
How mortal hands such tiny things could do."

Feather and rice baskets, scattered about, contained fossils, minerals, metals, and ores, natural and unnatural. Poonahed screens and card racks hung against the walls, and Poonahed footstools encumbered the floor. Albums filled and to be filled; a French almanack, an old "Forget me Not," and a new "Keepsake," with some flowers and butterflies more brilliant than nature, were scattered in elegant negligence on the principal table. To save the carpet, according to Mrs. Jones,—or to languidize the light into a voluptuous shadow, according to Miss Jones,—thick muslin curtains excluded every ray of sunshine, had the storm allowed of such appearing. The piano was open, and

"Believe me if all those endearing young charms,"

was displayed on the stand. In short, so full was the room, one only thing seemed to have been forgotten in it, namely, that it was ever to be inhabited by any thing less aerial than a butterfly. All was sentimental, nothing comfortable. True there were chairs in the room; but what with the horror of overturning little painted tumblers and great painted jars, rice flowers and China lambs, he must have had a daring spirit who could have ventured to seat himself without trembling, and shrinking into as small a compass as possible. Such was Alford's description of the room to his mother.

"How could you think of bringing me here, Alford?" said his sister, as she threw herself on a sofa, in such a careless manner as to send some of the Poonah butterflies flying through the room. "The cave of Trophonius were nothing to this den of sentimental rubbish."

"Den of sentimental rubbish, indeed! Why it is an exact model of the lovely Susan's own mind."

"You are right; a complication of follies, a confused multitude of silly nothings, a trashy scrap-book!"

"Oh no! a beautifully-varied Album. But dear me, Helen, here have I been defending *la belle Susanne*, and neglecting to provide a seat for *la plus belle Helene*. To which of these beautiful ingenuities will you play vis a vis?"

"Baron of Bucklivie, may the foul fiend drive thee,
And a' to pieces rive thee,
For building sic a town;
Where there 's neither horse meat nor man's meat,
Nor a chair to sit down,"

repeated Catherine, laughing at his difficulty in seating Helen and himself; but still retaining the whole of her sofa.

Mr. Dormer looked round in contemptuous silence, and took his station at the window; that favourite retreat of the sullen.

"Take care of your heart, Dormer," said Alford. "The lovely Susan must be preparing for conquest."

"I am invulnerable!" answered he haughtily. "Not to be won by a toy, however beautiful, or a being as changeable as change itself;" and he glanced towards Helen.

"Treason! treason! treason!" cried Alford. "To what punishment do you doom him, ladies, for this satire on your sex. The youngest must speak first; so come, Helen, no refusal; you shall pronounce his doom. What shall it be?"

"A full and free pardon, to shame him, if that be possible, into more noble conduct."

"There is generosity, Dormer! Down on one knee man, confess your error, and return thanks."

"I must not accept the pardon Miss St. Maur would accord, since I cannot change an opinion as easily as some."

"The pardon was granted unconditionally. We care not whether your opinions change or not; the shame and the sorrow of retaining one so unjust, must remain with yourself."

"Well, and proudly answered, Helen; and now, sister, for your doom. See how abashed the culprit looks."

"Abashed! he seems to me more like some dire enchanter who, robbed of his magic wand, strives to look us into stone. Yes, it is so! the wand and the power have passed from his hands; they are mine, and his doom shall be said." She rose as she uttered these words, and, waving a stick of *les Graces* which lay near her, continued with a look and manner worthy an ancient Pythoness. "The spell of pride and of passion be upon you through life and till death. She you would win—she whom you love shall shrink from and shun you—your lip shall smile, but your heart shall weep—you shall gain power to know its nothingness—have flatterers to learn their hollow.

ness—love friends to feel their falseness—win popularity to find it fleeting as change itself. The spell of blighted ambition, of pride, and of passion, be upon you ; till, mid the wreck of all things else, you turn to woman's love, and know her what she is. What think you of this, Helen ?" changing her tone and attitude in an instant to listless indifference, as she again sunk yawning on the sofa, "I think I acted Sibyl to perfection. The Cumean was nothing to me."

"Indeed you did," said her brother ; "Helen is amazed and Dormer astounded !"

For once his statement was not exaggerated. Words, look, and attitude, had been so wild and impassioned, that it was difficult to imagine her only in sport ; whilst her sudden transition to careless, and as it seemed natural indifference, might have puzzled the most penetrating observer. That she should have startled and surprised the other two was nothing so very extraordinary ; but that Dormer, the proud, the self-possessed, should own the power of acting, if acting it was, proved a triumph indeed.

For some moments after she had ceased, he neither spoke or moved ; but, though the darkness of the room, and his back being to the window, prevented his companions from reading clearly the expression of his countenance, still enough was discernible to prove that Catherine's spell had not been uttered in vain.

"You are avenged, ladies !" cried Alford in surprise ; "the traitor's doom is sealed !"

His friend started at the words, then recovering himself by a violent effort, and bowed haughtily to the modern Sibyl, as he said, "Lady Catherine Alford is an inimitable actress ; but she has yet to learn that I defy her charms, and scorn her spells."

A change came over that lady's features. Her cheek blanched to a marble whiteness, then glowed like a crimson cloud ; but Helen alone marked this unusual emotion, yet wondered not at it, as the bitterness of his tone had scarcely less effect on her who had not provoked it. She remembered not at the moment the difference of their characters. A gloom fell on the little party, and all felt relieved when Mrs. and Miss Jones entered the room ; both ladies exhibiting strong marks of haste in their adornment. The best dress of the mother, huddled on in honour of such distinguished guests, was put on awry ; whilst the minutely arranged ringlets of the sentimental blonde, bore evident marks of cramping.

Still was their presence most warmly welcomed by at least three of the party ; and even Catherine forgot her dislike, in the change of conversation their entrance occasioned.

"I consider this is a most fortunate shower, since it has furnished an excuse for our paying you a visit. We were all dying to come and see you, but, as you had not called at Marston, feared it would not be etiquette," began Lord Alford, almost before Mrs. Jones had entered the apartment.

"Oh, la ! your lordship is so good," replied the simpering lady, courtesying very low, "I am sure I should be quite shocked to think we had been at all wanting in respect to her ladyship ; and we should have called before, but we thought, as her ladyship only came down on Friday, she might be busy unpacking."

Lady Catherine's lip curled with contempt at the idea ; but Mrs. Jones perceived it not, and continued :

"I am sure, my lord, I am exceedingly sorry ; I hope her ladyship is not offended. I will call to-morrow and say how it was ; and Susy shall call on Lady Catherine."

"Ay, do ! Catherine would scarcely come here, and she looks offended now," said he, laughing mischievously at his sister's annoyance.

"Dear me ! your lordship does not say so. What shall I do ?" and what with deciding which should receive the lowest reverence, Lady Catherine Alford with a title, and five hundred a year ; or Miss St. Maur without a title, and ten thousand a year ; and the answering his civil speeches, the poor woman was, as she told her daughter afterwards, quite in a maze. As usual, fear triumphed over love, and Lady Catherine, with her proud looks, gained the day over Miss St. Maur, with her sweet smile ; and, after a due depth of reverence, she began a tiresome and fulsome apology to the titled lady, much to her vexation and the amusement of Alford. But Lady Catherine was not a person to submit to any thing annoying, if she could possibly relieve herself from the infliction ; without rising from the sofa, she cut short the good lady's harangue, by assuring her, in a very brusque manner, that no offence whatever had been felt at her not calling, and desiring she would on no account put herself to any inconvenience by paying an early visit.

This speech was intelligible even to the obtuse Mrs. Jones, who shrank back abashed, and could not recover her equanimity for some time ; though Helen, to dispel her chagrin, talked to her with even more than her usual politeness. See.

ing Catherine had destroyed all further amusement in that quarter, Alford turned to the daughter, paying her the most extravagant compliments, which she received with more than their due of gratitude. "Go where I will, Miss Jones, I can never see a room so filled as this. Here the loveliness of nature is surpassed by the inimitable ingenuities of art. On whichever side I turn my eyes, the most beautiful specimens of the delicate workmanship of lovely woman's hands meet my enraptured vision. Who would not be a butterfly, to be rendered immortal by your glowing pencil? Who would not become a bee, and furnish wax to be moulded by those delicate fingers into such admirable mockeries of the odorous decorations of the parterre? What a paradise you have created around you! rich in beauty! redolent in grace! Then that album, whose heart-moving, spirit-stirring contents, one moment rouse the mind to all the glorious daring of some high emprise, then melt it into the languishment of hopeless love, or the luxuriousness of delicious repose! That one could but throw off the galling chain of pomp and pride, and all the panoply of state, and dwell in such a paradise as this, with some fair Eve, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot.' Do you not revel in this bower of delights?"

"Oh yes, indeed!" replied the gratified Susan, throwing down her "speaking blue eyes, shaded by their silken lashes," as she herself wrote to her friend, one possessed of a kindred mind. "I love to recline near the open casement, at the balmy evening hour, when the gaudy glare of day has passed away, and the soul subduing silence is only broken by the heart thrilling notes of the eastern bulbul, pouring forth his strain of enraptured love to the glowing rose, whose drooping flower, distilling dew, whispers her sympathy with her adorer."

"Sweet enthusiast! How few can feel as you do!"

"Oh no, my lord: it is the torture of my sad fate to meet with few who can comprehend the sensitive intensity of my feelings, or riot in the exquisite ecstasies that thrill my bosom, whilst luxuriating on nature's beauties, or trembling at the touch of dissolving poesy. But there are some minds, who, soaring above the cold formalities of life, can climb the mountain height, and, melting into the ethereal clouds——"

"Susy, my dear," said her mother, interrupting this splendid flight of fancy, "I am afraid Jane has forgotten about the cake; do just go and see." In vain all protested they wanted no cake, Susy was obliged to go, and Alford compelled to

imagine the conclusion of the young lady's most unintelligible sublimity. The daughter being gone, he turned again to the mother for amusement, but, though unable to avoid smiling at Susan's folly, Helen too highly disapproved of his conduct to give him any encouragement, and kept Mrs. Jones so completely engaged in conversation, that his lordship was obliged to be quiet. The entrance of Susan with Jane and the cake, occasioned a little bustle, during which Mrs. Jones whispered an enquiry as to the strange gentleman up in the window.

"What do you think of him?" was the answer. "The gentleman looks very black; perhaps he is affronted because I have not spoken to him: but I think I spoke to him once before, and he looked quite as black then, and would not give me an answer; and, as nobody talked to him, I did not know whether he was a friend of yours or not."

"I will introduce you, and pray consider him as my friend, or no, as you please."

"Mrs. Jones, Mr. Percy Dormer!" said he, advancing towards his friend, followed by the lady; "though perhaps this introduction is quite unnecessary, as Mrs. Jones says she thinks you are the black gentleman whom she met a few days since."

"Mrs. Jones does me too much honour," turning full upon her with a look that nearly annihilated the poor woman, and threatened the demolition of sundry pet pieces of handiwork, arranged on a small table, which she had nearly overturned in her haste to retreat. The terror of Mrs. Jones—the horror of Miss Jones—at her mother's having called the sublime looking stranger the "black gentleman;" and the hauteur of that superb personage himself, formed too ridiculous a combination to be resisted. Catherine and her brother indulged in a hearty laugh; and the latter always maintained that Helen did more than smile.

La belle Susanne, vexed beyond expression, stept hastily forward to apologize in her most bewitching manner, and, in her haste, threw down a large green jar, which rolling against the maid, who was handing the cake and wine, so startled her as to occasion the overthrow of all the contents of the waiter. Away rolled plates, glasses, decanters, and jar, amid the terrified exclamations of mistress and maid, and renewed shouts of laughter from Alford and his sister.

Dormer disdained even a smile, but gazing on the whole scene in contemptuous silence, looked, as Catherine between her fits of laughter whispered Helen, very like the "black

gentleman" to whom Mrs. Jones had likened him. Our heroine, who was vexed with herself for joining in the merriment, soon repressed her mirth, and sought to repair as much as possible the mischief done. Catherine, on the contrary, springing from the sofa, declared the weather was quite fine; called on Mr. Dormer to attend her, and thanking Mrs. Jones for a most entertaining visit, departed in haste, desiring Helen and Alford to follow immediately. Lady Catherine and Mr. Dormer had proceeded some way ere they were joined by their companions. Not a word had passed between them; but this was not extraordinary, as Lady Catherine seldom spoke to her brother's friend, save for the purpose of annoying him, and he rarely addressed the lady from inclination.

"Well, Alford," said his sister as he gained her side; "any new amusement? Mr. Dormer is most anxious to hear the termination of the scene. You cannot imagine how it entertained him; so much so indeed, he would have lingered still, had I not claimed his attendance. Oh it was irresistible! and I forgive you for taking me there. Mr. Dormer is most anxious to learn what resemblance Mrs. Jones could see between him and a certain personage," and she looked at him maliciously.

"The resemblance is only in your fertile imagination, Catherine, and I am loaded with apologies to Mr. Dormer for the mistake; and for which I more than suspect Alford is answerable. They dine with me next week, and I have half promised your forgiveness, Mr. Dormer. Have I been too bold?"

"I hope Miss St. Maur does not suppose such a woman as that capable of exciting my anger?" he replied, only half mollified even by her sweetness, as he still recollected she had joined in the laugh.

"Then what, in the name of all that is sentimental! as *la belle Susanne* would say, had ruffled your temper? for I am sure you looked black enough to justify her mother's mistake," said Alford.

"It is all over now," thought Helen, "and I have played peace maker in vain."

"The folly and the changeableness of others," replied his friend, too much provoked to be polite, and anxious even in his own mind to lay the blame on any but himself.

"Your own had of course no share in causing such an unusual occurrence," remarked Catherine, with even more than her usual bitterness. "At any rate, we thank you for your

polite inuendo. Oh, for the days of our grandmothers; when politeness was as indispensable to a gentleman, as his sword and queue."

"I suspect our revered grandmothers would have been shocked at our degeneracy, had they come forth and seen our proceedings to day," said Helen, anxious to prevent a reply from Dormer, and restore good humour to all. "For my part, I am as shocked at myself, as my grandmother could have been for me, at laughing so unmercifully at poor Mrs. Jones."

"Indeed! Well, I think Mr. Dormer's superb look at her want of penetration was sufficient excuse! But pray why did you linger behind then, if not to enjoy the scene a little longer?"

"You know me better, Catherine."

"What! did Miss-Propriety stay behind then to make amends for our evil deeds?"

"Very much like it, despite your laughter."

"And you give her a dinner as a peace offering? If I had not such a *canaille*-phobia, I would assist at the entertainment."

"Thank you! but in that case it might be more piquante than would suit the simple tastes of my guests."

"So really, dear good girl! you have had the magnanimity to become the scape-goat for our offences. But are you quite sure your good resolves will not evaporate in the course of time, and that you will not take to your bed on the fatal day?"

"Mock as you please: you will neither move me to anger or change."

"Change! Not even an opinion? Did you ever change in your life?" turning round, and fixing her penetrating eyes on her face.

"Yes, my dear,—colour, more than twice for you; when your impertinence has become intolerable."

For once, the piercing eyes of Catherine fell beneath the steady gaze of her friend, if friends they could be called, but recovering herself instantly, she said, assuming an air of superiority: "*Courage, ma chere petite!* with a few more of my instructions you really may become a witling. I had no idea you could have uttered any thing so severe, and begin to have hopes of you."

"Would I could say the same for you!" said Helen gaily and kindly, for the feeling that had roused her to check her

impertinence had been subdued, and the irony of her companion wounded her not. "*Votre pauvre petite* has no ambition to become a wilting; so you need not dread a rival."

Again Catherine fixed her penetrating eyes on her friend's face; but all there was calm, lovely, and open; and she turned again to her brother. "Alford, lithograph the scene of Helen appeasing those intolerables."

"I dare not. Helen has already given me one long lecture, and I have promised to be a good boy for the future. Enough that Helen looked like an angel; I like a fool; and Mrs. and Miss Jones forgot the demolition of glass, china, &c. even your laughter and Dormer's disdain, whilst listening to her dulcet tones. The only laughable thing, for *la belle Susanne* felt and looked but did not speak, was, that poor Mrs. Jones made such a lowly reverence I feared she would never rise again."

"Do you mean to become as demure as herself?"

"No fear of that, my piquante sister: it required all her admonishing looks to keep me from sentimentalising whilst she played *l'aimable*."

"And on what plea did she blame you?"

"Rather a reasonable one, though not of the newest fashion."

'Be you to others kind and true,
As you'd have others be to you;
And neither say, nor do to men,
Whate'er you would not take again.'

Thus runs the old lay, if I remember, that we used to repeat in our days of innocence."

"Pshaw! I have laid all such old saws aside with my sampler; only to be brought forth again for the edification of some future nephew and niece. Take care! or Helen may remind you of another old saw. 'That example is better than precept.'"

"Then I must furnish her with a modern instance to the contrary."

"But pray, has she convinced you of the unpardonable guilt of laughing at the follies of others?"

"She convinced me, at least for the time, of the impropriety of nourishing and increasing those follies for our amusement; and spoke so eloquently, and pleaded so sweetly, that I have half made a vow to encourage wisdom rather than folly; and to seek to reform, rather than ridicule."

"Oh, then 'Othello's occupation's gone!' and you will soon

become as complete a *precieuse ridicule* as your reprover."

"Hear Helen for herself."

"No, I thank you! one lecture for one day is surely enough;" and striking her horse, it started into a canter.

Alford's steed, unwilling to be outdone, followed; and Helen, unexpectedly, and much against her inclination, found herself alone with Mr. Dormer; and, before her horse could change its pace, his hand was on her rein.

"Why is Miss St. Maur so careful to spare the feelings of all but one? Why is he alone to be unforgiven? Is this just?"

There was an earnestness in this appeal, which surprised and confused her; but she tried to answer with carelessness.

"This is rather a grave charge, and I am not inclined to allow its justice; but, if I were so, what can you expect from one of that sex, who are more changeable than change itself."

"Here is proof of the justice of my charge," and he coloured highly; "whilst you forget or disregard the idle words of others, you remember with displeasure all of mine. Why is that one alone to be unforgiven?"

"What if that one have more deeply offended?"

"But what if he have repented more deeply still?"

"Will you avouch he has done so?"

"Will you forgive him, if I so avouch? Surely his offence was not so heinous?"

"Do you plead for justice or forgiveness, Mr. Dormer?" The altered tone of this last question startled him.

There was a moment's struggle, but pride yielded; and he replied in a deep earnest voice: "For forgiveness! Will you not grant it?"

"It is granted!" she said in a low sweet voice, turning away from those bright eyes that spoke their thanks.

Before she was aware her hand was pressed between both his; but the next moment she had given her horse the rein, and, followed by Dormer, was hastening to rejoin the party.

"Were I any one but Lady Catherine Alford, I should envy you that brilliant colour, Helen. How did you get it? was it the ride? or have the gentlemen been doing the gallant?"

"Either one you please," replied Alford, marking the increased glow on his favourite's cheek, whilst Helen entered the house, trying to appear as though she had not heard the question.

CHAPTER VII.

To woman, whose best books are human hearts,
 Wise heaven a genius less profound imparts.
 His awful! Her's is lovely; his should tell
 How thunderbolts, and her's how roses fell.
 Her rapid mind decides while he debates,
 She feels a truth that he but calculates.
 He, provident, averts approaching ill,
 She snatches present good with ready skill.
 That active perseverance his, which gains,
 And her's that passive patience which sustains.
 Winds shatter oaks, while osiers wave secure;
 Seas waste the rock, while yielding sands endure;
 And gentle woman, to her fate resigned,
 Prevails o'er woes that vanquish stern mankind.

WOMAN.

Well,

I see you are the master of the house.

I will accommodate myself to you.

FAUST.

THE storm of the morning was but the forerunner of the storm of the evening. The air became oppressive—vivid flashes of lightning lit up the most distant corners of the large apartment—and made the room appear one blaze of liquid flame. The roar of the thunder followed almost instantaneously on the flash of the lightning—the wind moaned in hollow gusts among the trees, yet scarcely moved the heavy black clouds that obscured the sky—large drops fell occasionally, with a dull plashing sound—and the whole scene was as sublime as a summer storm could be. Helen sat at one of the windows watching its awful beauty.

"How comes this?" said Catherine, who had been looking at her for some time. "I thought you were no admirer of storms."

"You are mistaken then; I admire nature under every form. 'Looking through nature up to nature's God.'"

"I fancied I had heard you declaim, more than once, on the calm beauty of a placid summer's evening."

"Very likely; for, though I may delight in Scott, surely I may admire Milton also."

"Very intellectually answered, but I suspect you like change as well as your neighbours."

"I have no doubt I find variety as charming as others."

"I do not clearly comprehend the distinction between change and variety. Do you mean to say you equally admire the storm and the sunshine? and think one heightens the beauty of the other?"

"Yes!" answered Helen, carelessly, too much absorbed in contemplating the beauty of the scene without, to pay much attention to her companion within.

"I thought as much," said Catherine ironically. "In that case you need not have been so indignant at my asking if you could change."

"In what case, Catherine? I don't understand you."

"Not the accusative; so you need not colour like a milk-maid; but the possessive, I conclude, to judge by what I saw when I looked back to discover if you and Mr. Percy Dormer were following. Nay, never look foolish! if young gentlemen will do such things, how can young ladies prevent them?"

"If I blush, Lady Catherine, it is for you more than myself," replied Helen, roused by her words. "I despise hints and insinuations, and this will not be our first quarrel on that subject. If you have any thing to ask, ask it—any thing to say, say it,—but play not the secret assassin—wound not in the dark."

For some moments the two young women stood fronting each other, looking as though to read the inmost thoughts. The gaze of both was steady and unshrinking, yet was neither free from emotion. Helen would have served Catherine to her power's extent; rarely retorted, and never intentionally wounded; but though she had been her playfellow from childhood, she could never feel any confidence in her. Catherine's feelings towards her, to judge from her conduct, were scarcely so friendly, but then she was always enigmatical.

Though Catherine generally assumed an air of superiority over her companion, who, conscious of her own powers, rarely resented her domineering tone; she had found more than once, if roused to exertion, there was a calm dignity, a candour and firmness about Helen, that always gave her the mastery over her opponent. These trials of power were never sought by Helen, and had of late been rather avoided by Catherine; who, warned by former defeats, kept within some bounds, but now it seemed as though some motive, far more strong than usual, had urged her on till retreat was almost impossible. The same feeling, whatever it might be, banished her usual tone of cool but bitter irony, and rendered her whole manner passionate and impetuous.

Finding she obtained no answer, and still anxious as ever to avoid any contention, Helen said, "If this encounter of the eyes will satisfy you, Catherine, so much the better ; I would always avert an encounter of tongues, for they are sharp weapons, and require consummate skill to wield them wisely ; and when once unsheathed may chance to inflict wounds no leech can heal. Suppose we proclaim a peace," and she held out her hand.

But Catherine took it not. The sweet expression of Helen's countenance seemed rather to strengthen than change her resolve.

"No, Helen ! no hollow peace !" she exclaimed passionately. "Truces and treaties are for cowards. You bade me ask,—listen and answer ! Do you remember saying in this very room, on such another evening, that though storms might vary the face of nature, they were even in their beauty to be dreaded ? That the storms of passion were more fearful still ; a volcanic mind more to be feared than a volcanic mountain ; and that you should prefer in domestic life the monotonous to the stormy ? That even the blaze of genius should not blind to the deformity of passion ? Do you remember this?"

"It is rather imperious to call upon me to remember words spoken some three years since. I may have said so, but I doubt whether it were not too wise a speech for me to have been its maker."

"At least, you acknowledge its wisdom?"

"Most certainly ! but what then?"

"Then you can never think of wedding Percy Dormer?"

Helen started ; this conclusion, so triumphantly asserted, was unexpected and confusing ; but again daring the almost stern gaze of her confronter, she answered calmly—

"I have had no thought of wedding Mr. Dormer, though I do not perceive the justice of your conclusion ; for he has many high and noble qualities."

"So you said three days since, judging by intuition, I conclude. Do you still think the same ? Has to-day taught you no bitter truths?"

"You can best answer that question."

"Pshaw ! I never flattered the heiress ; but I would be your friend for once. You understood my question, though others did not. Am I indeed to understand your opinion of Mr. Dormer is unchanged?"

"I rank Mr. Dormer high above the common herd ; and hold him endowed with very superior abilities, and many splendid virtues."

"Helen! Helen! You may deceive yourself, but you cannot deceive me," cried Catherine, still more passionately.—"You are wilfully blind—you see the tempest and yet dare its dangers. Be warned! if you would not perish in the storm. Percy Dormer is not for such as you—he is the very volcano of which you spoke. Shun him! avoid him!—his violence would crush you—he would despise the softness of your character, when the charm of your beauty had passed away. You would be to him as a toy to a child, thrown aside and neglected—the adulated heiress would sink into the despised wife—you would perish in the war of elements—he would die in the monotony of tranquillity. Helen! again I say be warned. And yet why should I say it? even now you scorn and deride my words. On—on—then to your fate, and the sorrow rest on your own head! Back to the window now, and dream the tempest is your sphere!"

There was something so wild, so passionate, in her voice and look, that Helen was amazed, and almost awed. Then came to remembrance her extraordinary conduct at Mrs. Jones's—a suspicion flashed across her—the colour went and came; and then, laying her hand on Catherine's arm, she looked earnestly into her face, with a kind but penetrating gaze. Catherine seemed anxious to avoid the scrutiny—but it might not be—and Helen spoke, despite the haughty look she assumed.

"As you wish the happiness of all concerned, answer me truly! Have you not a deeper motive than my welfare for your warning? Think of me as a sister—say but yes."

Totally regardless of the almost affectionate kindness shown by the questioner, Catherine dashed away the hand that rested on her arm; stepped back a few paces, whilst the flashing of her eyes contrasted strongly with the deathlike hue of her complexion, and her voice quivered with passion as she spoke.

"Miss St. Maur, you are avenged! What have you seen in Lady Catherine Alford that you should deem her mean enough to stoop to give her love unasked? Has she so wooed the notice of the gentleman, that you take her for a lovelorn damsel? Be not alarmed, you have no rival to dread in me!"

"I dread no rival," replied Helen warmly, indignant at the insinuation.

"You are secure then! and only wished to triumph over my weakness. I thank you. I dreamt not of such prompt decision, and my warning has been late; but my prediction will come true;" and she turned to leave the room.

"Stay, Lady Catherine! and hear me!"

"No ! I cannot stay to talk about the wedding now. You can consult Sir Charles Grandison, and take Harriet Byron for your model, and Garnette shall dress your hair," said she, still advancing to the door.

"Catherine, I will be heard ;" and Helen stood before her. "You shall not thus shelter yourself under the mask of folly."

Catherine seemed half inclined to force a passage, and the expression of her countenance, so completely at variance with the late assumed carelessness of her tone, had well nigh induced Helen to allow her to depart ; but the expression changed the instant she saw it was observed, and throwing herself listlessly into a chair, she answered—

"What must be, must be ; so pray let us have the whole scene. It will be sublime to a degree."

"I have no scene to relate."

"You need not be shy about it, my dear ; we saw him kiss your hand, and you allow you dread no rival."

"You saw no such thing ; and if I dread no rival it is because there is no matter for rivalry. I meant not to wound you by my question ; and pardon me if I say it was the best excuse that could be made for your violence. If your warnings were meant in kindness, I thank you ; if not, I scorn the predictions or the Sybil, though she performed her part inimitably. The softness of my character cannot, and shall not, induce me to yield my judgment to the prejudice of one whose strange conduct is, to say the best of it, inexplicable. And now having heard my explanation and decision, you may depart ;" and she moved from the door.

"Who has your permission to depart ?" asked Alford, entering the room at the moment, and marking with surprise the stately step of one lady and the compressed lip and indignant frown of the other. "What is the matter, my most sublime sister ? Are you preparing to enact the Sibyl again for Dormer's edification ? Here he is, just in time."

"No Alford ! I am weary now. I have been enacting a play for Helen's amusement, and performed my part so admirably that the simple one believed me in earnest ; and whilst I only sought a little fencing with foils, she had well nigh converted our intended mock encounter into a real and deadly fight. Do go and appease her."

"He need not trouble himself," said Helen, who had turned round in amaze at the bold assertion. "I am perfectly aware of the nature of our combat, and deserve as much credit for good acting as yourself."

"I doubt it not," said Alford, who saw there was more

meant than met the ear, "since you always act with propriety, whilst Catherine sometimes o'ersteps the modesty of nature."

"A perfect judgment, thou most impartial judge, who decidest without hearing either side. A polite brother, they say, is a black swan; and I have no right to expect such a rarity. I leave you, Helen, to perfect yourself in the retort courteous against our next encounter; but let not my warning be in vain."

"Are you not alarmed at the lightning, Miss St. Maur," asked Dormer, as he took his station beside her at the window.

"No! not alarmed; though I can scarcely describe the feeling it does excite. It is not fear, nor pleasure; but a sort of awful delight—a something to be felt—not told. The feeling awakened by sublime poetry, describing some fearful doom or some momentous crisis, most nearly resembles it, though far, very far inferior. Alford laughs, and classes me with his favourite Susan, I guess; so I must hush my raptures."

"La même chose souvent est dans la bouche d'une femme d'esprit, une naïveté, ou un bon mot; et dans celle d'une sotte une sottise."

"Comme les absens ont toujours tort, I suppose I must express due gratitude for the compliment."

Before Alford could reply a summons came from his father, to which after various strugglings and grumbings he at length paid obedience.

"I sometimes wonder," said Dormer, "how Alford and I ever came to be friends, for, I believe, there is scarcely one point of sympathy between us. His gaiety almost approaches to levity; my gravity almost descends to gloom. Our friendship is to me a strange anomaly, to be wondered at but never explained."

"I may not be so arrogant as to pretend an explanation of what you have asserted is inexplicable; but I do not think you have stated the matter fairly. In contrasting, with some exaggeration, two qualities, you have forgotten how the general characters may assimilate. Alford's levity, if you will have it so, is tempered and thrown into shade by his many virtues; and your gloom, since you will call it thus, is redeemed, if your friend's penetration may be relied on, by great and noble qualities. Both would tread the same bright path of virtue and honour."

He neither disclaimed or thanked her for her praise, for it was no idle or insincere compliment. He felt too it was

totally different from the adulation and flattery to which he had so long been accustomed ; and which, while he believed he viewed, and perhaps really did view with contempt, was yet, from the force of habit, partly expected and almost desired. His looks alone showed his pleasure, and those Helen saw not, for she was again looking out on the storm. The conversation was too agreeable to be discontinued, and Dormer replied—

“ Believe me, I am too much Alford’s friend not to be inclined to do his virtues justice, and if I said levity it was in gaiety, not in malice ; still I am at a loss to account for our friendship. The more so as it was a matter of choice rather than chance ; and I am inclined to think that a similarity of manners or pursuits is more frequently the foundation of friendship than a similarity in morals.”

“ Granted, among the vain and frivolous, if any thing they can feel deserves the name of friendship ; but not in minds of a higher stamp. If I remember rightly, and I should do so, for Alford never wearies of the tale, you saved his life at the imminent risk of your own ; and that just after, provoked at your lofty bearing, he had exerted all his powers of tormenting. From that moment regret and gratitude made him resolve to make you his friend. You tried to shun him, but he would not be shunned ; till he at last gained your friendship. Something in the same way by which De Rocca won de Stael ; declaring he would love her so well she would not be able to refuse him. Such is Alford’s tale.”

“ Though it contains much truth, it contains not all the truth. Alford has omitted his devotion to me, during a long illness, and all the *brusqueries* with which I met his advances.”

“ Do not believe me ignorant of those *brusqueries*,” said she, archly. “ They were the slighter touches which served to fill up the first rough sketch, and place you as a perfect picture on my mind’s canvass, in all its variety of light and shade, form and colouring.”

“ Indeed ! and I so ignorant of the honour. But perhaps such ignorance was for my happiness ; I might have quarrelled with my own portrait.”

“ Scarcely with such as I had drawn it from Alford’s description. If my memory does not play me false, at the sage age of sixteen your station was a little, a very little lower than some of our favourite heroes ; nay, I am not quite sure, that we did not endow you with all the qualities—the noblest, the best, and the bravest to be found in our youthful idols ;

or whether we did not even give you precedence over Bayard and Bruce ; Wallace and Sobieski."

"Then I am to understand that, at the sager age of twenty, you bid me descend from the heroship to which in your days of delusion you had elevated me ; thus, making me exemplify the disagreeable truth, that no man is a hero to his *valet-de-chambre* ; or, in more poetic phrase, that distance is the element of sublimity. Happy for me if Alford had never elevated your expectations ; still happier, if by failing to obtain the introduction so eagerly desired, I had not, by the dull reality of my presence, defaced the splendid picture of your imagination ! Then might I still have lived in your mind glowing with all the virtues of a Bayard."

One would have thought her words might have pleased the most unreasonable ; but the tone of pique in which this was said, showed he could ill brook the being thought less than perfection, even in playfulness.

"I am not going to be lured into a complimentary speech, Mr. Dormer ; nor am I going to quarrel with you for the slight estimation in which you hold our introduction ; but, I will simply say, had you been Bayard himself, and nothing lower it seems will content you, there must have been at twenty some abatement in the homage of sixteen. All colours fade from time, and feelings and impressions fade like them. The first impressions on a young mind are deep and vivid, and retain for some time a great portion of their original strength ; but to one just opening into life, impressions, ideas, thoughts, and feelings, follow each other in rapid succession like the waves of the sea ; remembered only as things that have been and are not, or it may be unremembered at all ; no trace left on the sandy beach over which they flowed ; and though a ninth wave may occasionally come, leaving a deeper track behind, still the succession of minor waves must soon lessen the impression. Besides, youth is the season of exaggeration and confidence. The beautiful is more than beautiful—a garden a paradise—a hill a mountain—an inland lake the boundless sea—and an officer in his Majesty's service a hero ! To the young it seems impossible to doubt or change ; but, at my sober age," and she smiled her own sweet playful smile, "we are wiser. In former days it would have been nothing short of treason to have hinted at an error in any of my favourites ; and now I sometimes doubt if there ever were such beings. In these days of stereotypes and steam engines, when elephants are actors, and chins musical instruments ; one

is inclined, in the pride of the present, to look back with contempt on the past, and hold its worthies, even with my Lord Monboddo, as little better than monkies with their tails cut off. Then the new histories of the olden times, which appear every day, so completely falsify the accounts of the ancients, that I am almost become a convert to the opinion, that history is but an accredited fiction, not more true, and less amusing, than the 'History of Jack the Giant Killer,' and his no less renowned namesake, the hero of the 'Beanstalk.' "

"Then I may perhaps, though no longer allowed to stand next to Bayard in your estimation, be permitted to take my place somewhat below the renowned 'Jack the Giant Killer.' "

"*Le roi s'y avisera !*" and again her playful smile beamed upon him, and checked his rising ill humour.

"But we have strangely wandered from the subject matter of our discourse, to speak fashionably, or parliamentary, I should say, only young ladies would not be supposed to know there was such a thing as a Parliament, were there not a few sentences about it in the History of England and Goldsmith's Geography, written for the use of schools. I forget whether we had accounted satisfactorily for the friendship of yourself and Alford."

"I own I was not quite satisfied on that point. I cannot understand how Alford, who has generally but little perseverance, persisted in overcoming my dislike ; or how we can feel such a regard for each other, when our opinions clash on almost every subject."

"Give Alford a sufficient motive, and he can be as persevering as Charles XII. himself ; or any other hero, ancient or modern ; and his gratitude sufficed on that occasion. Besides, you were almost the only person whose dignity proved some slight check to his raillery, and your open dislike piqued him to overcome it. And how could you fail to be pleased with such flattering perseverance ? Nor is the difference in your opinions so very great. Alford is now so addicted to raillery, as rarely to utter his real sentiments, and prefers a *bon mot* to an argument. His father's vacillating and interested conduct makes him shun politics at present ; but I yet hope to see him an honour to his high station, and he often talks of taking you for his model in times to come."

"Then I am to understand our friendship is the most natural thing in nature. That it was born of a noble principle, nourished by virtue, honour, and patriotism, and has met with no blight or stinting in its growth, from weakness, or vanity,

or folly ; in a word, that our friendship will consign that of Damon and Pythias to the waters of oblivion. Is it so ?”

“Is there no temperate zone, Mr. Dormer ? Must we dwell at the tropics or the poles ? Have I not said that my youthful dream of man’s perfection has been broken, and almost banished ?”

“Then you hold that our friendship is tainted by weakness, or folly, or vanity. I thought as much, when you spoke of De Rocca and De Stael. He was a fool to strive for the love of one made up of vanity, who would not yield for him the glitter of a name : and she but proved her selfishness in yielding to the flattery of his devotion.”

“Hush ! hush ! I love De Rocca were it only for his work on Spain, and we must not be too severe on De Stael for the vanity excited by talents so unusual in woman. The unknown may be worthless, yet unblamed ; the celebrated stand on the pedestal of renown, exposed to the criticism of the reptile and the vulgar, and slandered by the stupid and malevolent. All see their faults, but only the good and the noble regret them. With national prejudice, I think, had she been an English-woman, educated to fulfil her duties at home rather than to shine abroad, that we might have loved and esteemed the woman as highly as we admire the genius.”

“Genius, remember, which she pined to exchange for beauty.”

“I cannot forget it, if I would ; for it made too deep and too painful an impression. I had sighed for genius : that trait, as it showed me the weakness of her character, had no mean share in awakening me from my dream of perfection ; yet she but did what others have done, and will do again.

‘The wished-for something, unpossessed,
Corrodes and leavens all the rest.’

This is wrong ; but where is the person who wishes not ? Thus, while we blame her for being anxious to exchange a noble gift for one so far inferior, let us consider how few are wiser. The merchant suffers care and vexation, toiling for riches whilst content and competence are within his reach ; the conqueror treads in blood to govern others, and leaves himself ungoverned ; and the statesman too often seeks for power and popular applause, in preference to the approval of his own conscience.”

“One example more, lady. The beauty still coquets for the admiration of the many, though possessed of the love of one.”

Had these words been uttered in her own spirit of playful retort, she would not have quarrelled with them; but they were not; and her answer slightly marked her displeasure at his piqued and lordly tone.

"I shall not be such a bigot as to deny that such may sometimes be the case: but I do believe, that if there be such a thing as a pure disinterested feeling, it is for woman to furnish the proof. If, blinded by beauty, you will fix your affections on a butterfly, what wonder if you grieve for your choice?"

"Sceptic as you avow yourself then, as to the perfectibility of man, you still firmly believe in the perfectibility of woman."

"Not exactly—a hope perhaps, rather than a belief."

"A distinction without a difference."

"No, a *nuance*! as a Parisian friend of mine would say."

"You seem inclined to make the French authorities for every thing this evening, Miss St. Maur. How do you mean to defend the justness and courteousness of your opinion?"

"The days of Bradamante are passed; and ladies are no longer expected to couch a lance in defence of person or opinion."

"Then you yield your opinion?"

"What opinion?"

"That man is always interested; woman always disinterested."

"Oh the wickedness and prejudice of the malevolent! to accuse me of saying any thing so rude. I did but hint that some men might be interested; and hoped some women were disinterested, and that as much from habits and education, as from any thing individually. I am sure we are firmer, warmer friends than you are. You have a thousand objects to occupy your thoughts, we but a hundred. Your affections are dispersed, ours concentrated. Nor am I quite sure that the dream of my early days has entirely passed away. It was so very beautiful, and made the world so like a paradise."

"Indulge such fancies still, and believe me once more a Bayard."

"No! no! no!" was her reply to his earnest appeal, shaking her head with a motion half playful, half melancholy.

"The babe must cease to think that it can play
With heaven's rain-bow, alchymists must doubt
The gold their shining crucibles give out."

"I am too dull to follow your changes, lady," he replied haughtily; "one moment dreams are held as flowers of paradise, and then the next are spoken lightly of. I am but dull of comprehension."

"So it should seem," she said rather coldly, hurt at his haughtiness, and it was some moments ere the gentleman resumed the conversation.

"Since I have acknowledged my stupidity, will not Miss St. Maur deign to explain her meaning more clearly, as a reward for my humility." There was a half-suppressed irony in his tone that was not to be mistaken, and the lady answered accordingly.

"Your humility might plead strongly in favour of your request, did I not fear I should but make the darkness more obscure. You do not understand me, and the chances are you never will." Here Dormer fancied he heard a sigh. "It is a matter of no consequence," and she turned to quit the room, but Dormer detained her.

"Your pardon! It is to me of the greatest consequence. Do but answer some simple questions."

Trembling, confused, she knew not why; Helen again turned to the window to conceal her emotion, and thus tacitly consented to his request. But it was now Dormer's turn to be confused. No sooner was he at liberty to ask an explanation, than he doubted if there were any thing to explain, and felt all the folly of taking so seriously what had been spoken so playfully. His resentment vanished, and he remained silently looking at his companion.

Now perfectly composed, and surprised at his silence, Helen turned to discover the cause, and after gazing at him for a moment, asked gaily:

"Why this silence? Are the questions too awful to be clothed in common words, or too trifling to be asked at all?"

"The latter, I believe," he replied, once more yielding to the influence of her gaiety. "A few minutes since, and I thought you guilty of nothing short of treason, and now I can imagine you nothing less than innocence itself."

"Oh! I am not the first who has been wrongfully suspected; and I more than guess, were this matter deeply examined, it would be found that the treason of my words is of a much lighter dye than the treason of your thoughts."

He coloured slightly at the charge so archly conveyed, and she continued:

"To speak seriously, dreaming of the natural perfectibility

of man, or woman either, is worse than folly, for the very idea is in guilty opposition to the Divine Revelation, and the experience of our own hearts. But, however we may acknowledge the general truth of man's depravity, there are few things which cause so much pain to the young warm heart, as the having that truth forced upon it by instances of individual guilt. It is then that the heart turns with disgust from its fellows, and shrinks sickened and sorrowful into itself. It is then that, loathing the world, we should sink into despair, did not the light of religion shed its soft splendour around our path, and give us glimpses of a heaven a thousand times more pure, more bright, than the paradise of young Imagination. You look amazed, but I am no misanthrope. An heiress at twenty could scarcely become any thing so unsocial; nor do I suspect all whom I meet. Though all have faults, most have virtues, and if we felt as deeply as we ought the magnitude of our own offences towards a Merciful Creator, we should judge more charitably of all offences committed towards ourselves." She paused for a moment, and then continued more gaily. "It may be that we enthusiasts have no right to complain at being called on to pay the penalty for our folly; but, the truth is, I have suffered much at having been obliged to displace from my list of favourites some of the idols of my imagination. I say now I know better, and that a burnt child dreads the fire; but I am forced to suspect occasionally that, substituting enthusiasm for ambition, La Bruyère's maxim is not far from the truth—*Le cas n'arrive guère; ou l'on puisse dire j'étois enthousiaste; ou on ne l'est point, ou on l'est toujours*. I believe it forms such an important part of my character, that fancy and reality will wage war, till a powerful ally of the latter shall step in to decide the combat. No wonder, therefore, if I sometimes believe, in despite of the reasonables, that St. George and the Dragon really fought *à l'outrance* on the mound below Offington Castle."

"Do not regret such a beautiful combination of mind, heart, and imagination," said Dormer, looking his admiration of the lovely enthusiast. "Long may the combat between fancy and reality continue.

'One shade the more, one shade the less,
Would mar that grace and loveliness.'

"Shame! shame! shame!" turning away her glowing cheek. "Your counsel is more flattering than judicious. We are accountable beings, and fancy is but an unskilful

guide. I shall suspect Mrs. Jones was correct to-day, for yours is the advice of the Evil One : divide, and govern."

"Believe it not ! I would but have you as you are ; your own heart would ever guide you safely."

"Not if I am to yield credence to flattery, for vanity is an unwise counsellor ; and could I acquire a cooler mood of mind, it might be for my own happiness, here and hereafter."

"A cooler mood of mind ! Is it possible you can desire to change the bright glow of enthusiasm for the cold dulness of apathy ? Can a mind like yours admire the still and stagnant pool ?"

"It has, at least, nothing to fear from storms."

"Nothing to fear from storms ! And could you, would you be content with a bare immunity from danger ; and, lest a storm should ruffle your serenity, forego the lightning flash of feeling, the brilliant visions of genius."

"We are not all geniuses."

"True ! but the power of fully appreciating genius, is scarcely less rare and splendid than genius itself."

"Do not its very rarity and splendour render it unfit for every day use ? I doubt if exclusiveness is calculated to increase happiness."

"Then you have no higher ambition than to be one of the common herd, on a par with the Joneses, and the Jenkinsons, and the Smithsons of every day life, who boast no minds above a saucepan. To pass your time in writing receipts, pickling, and preserving ; spoiling your children ; scolding your servants ; and talking over your neighbours, the last new novel, and the last new fashion in a breath ; or, to express all I mean, in the quaint terms of Shakspeare, whom it is always allowable to quote, devote your thoughts, your talents, and your love,

'To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer.'

"Oh, horrible ! horrible ! Mr. Dormer. How can you terrify me with such a frightful picture ?" and she laughed, and held up her hands in horror.

"I only paint the being you wish to resemble."

"But I do not allow the correctness of your pencil : yours is a caricature, and not a likeness. Since you have quoted one poet, let me quote another——

'Nor peace nor ease the mind can know,
Which like the needle true,
Turns at the touch of joy or woe,
But turning trembles too.'

"And you are positively sincere in desiring this dull ease."

"Peaceful calm! if you please."

"Word it as you choose. Let it be luxurious serenity, or blissful inanity; or any thing else you may prefer. What's in a name? But can you repeat that prayer for indifference in sincerity?"

"I cannot tell. I only feel there is much of truth in it."

'For as distress the soul can wound,

'Tis pain in each degree;

'Tis bliss but to a certain bound,

Beyond 'tis agony."

Either the truth of her words, or the earnestness with which they were spoken, struck him; and he paused for a moment, and then resumed: "You would really enrol yourself as a disciple of quietism?"

"I sometimes think so; but, like the children of a lesser growth, I am not quite sure I know what I wish."

"Like those said children, I suspect you do not know what is best for you. Appoint me your guardian, till you shall have come to years of discretion."

She shook her head.

"You persist then? Will you give up all those sudden and brilliant perceptions of beauty, moral and intellectual; when mind feels it has met its kindred mind, and soars for a time above the dull realities of life; the participation in those lightning flashes of genius, that for brief space illumine the darkest spots; and those moments of rich and unutterable splendour, the few only can experience; the dazzling ocean of thought, with its vast immensity; and the deep intensity of feeling, for which mortal lips have no fitting words? Will you yield all these?" and he looked earnestly into her lovely face.

"These things are too beautiful to resign," she said, drawing her breath, which had been suspended during his passionate appeal; and for some moments both were lost in the communion of deep feeling. A superb flash of lightning throwing its rich flood of radiance full upon them, and an almost contemporaneous burst of thunder startled them. Both felt the awful beauty of sight and sound, but Dormer only spoke.

"The very elements proclaim their approval of your decision."

"Are you quite sure they do not intend a warning?"

"Weak minds only yield to omens and warnings; the strong mind is above their superstition. No! this is as it

should be ! Rather would I dwell amid tempests and storms, the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the volcano, dying or conquering, than drone away my days in stagnant monotony, a nameless and unhonoured thing."

Helen started—had Catherine spoken truth ?—but he saw not the start, and continued :

"Let the vile suffer, but the noble dare. The victor's crown or the martyr's chaplet for me, rather than a life of dull ease, and an unhonoured grave."

He would have taken Helen's hand, but she withdrew it, and looked at him mournfully. We have owned she was an enthusiast, though all were not aware of the fact ; but thanks to the strong religious feelings, planted and fostered by her parents, and which guided her actions, however she might on very rare occasions have appeared ridiculous in the eyes of the worldly, the cautious, and the cold, her enthusiasm had never yet led her into error. The time of trial was coming. Enthusiast as she was, there was a something so violent and uncalled for in his words and tone, and such a flashing of his dark eye, that she trembled and feared more than she admired ; and her acute penetration whispered a tale she had but little inclination to believe. The rich glow that had brightened her cheek vanished, and left it as white as the dress she wore. He perceived the change, and enquired the cause in a softer tone.

"I scarcely know, but I fear I must make a wiser decision. Your words are alarming !"

"Would you retract already ?" he asked, almost fiercely. "Remember ! it is said, in answer to your prayer :

'No grain of cold indifference,
Was ever yet allied to sense.'

"Perhaps not," she said, trying to rally ; "but if I admire less, I shall suffer less ; and all be spared the pang a sun-beam can give, the wound a sound can inflict."

"You cast away then, as things unworthy to be prized, the brightest gifts of heaven ?"

"Not so ! I spoke in sport before. I would but be upon my guard lest I should pervert them. It is a rash and fearful thing to sigh for storms, to prove our powers of controlling them : a mightier arm than man's must guide the whirlwind—bid the earthquake stay."

He looked upon her almost with scorn, as he said angrily : "This is as it should be ; a proof of your desire to be ever

the same. Where are the lofty aspirings of the past moment? the noble thoughts? the sublime imaginings? Are they all gone?"

Her eyes sunk beneath the almost fierceness of his gaze; and she answered in a low sweet voice: "I would but moderate, not banish all these things."

"Moderate! Ay, all things should be in moderation! I honour your propriety! Hold this control, till you have learnt to prize alike the lofty aspirations of the noble and the talented, and the ingenious trimming to a dress."

In spite of his violence, Helen could not forbear smiling at the last remark; and she said in sport, thinking to divert the storm: "I will take your advice, and try how moderate I can become."

Too angry to believe her other than in earnest, his words again broke forth with more than their former vehemence.

"Success attend your endeavours! May victory crown your efforts! Pride yourself on your right judgment; sneer at all who are less cold-blooded than yourself; ban genius and high imaginings; despise all but the useful; and wage a Bonapartean warfare against ideology. Do all this, and then—but pshaw!" stopping abruptly in the heat and full of his vehemence, "I forgot to whom I was speaking;" and bowing scornfully, he added, "I beg your pardon, lady."

Whatever were Helen's thoughts at what had passed, it was evident, from her strong effort at self control, she had no inclination they should be even divined; it would be ungenerous therefore to reveal them. After a silence of some minutes, she said abruptly, turning towards him as she spoke: "Mr. Dormer, you are an infidel!"

He looked in amaze at the startling assertion.

"Nay, never deny it! You think women have no minds, and are incapable of participating in man's noble thoughts."

He was more amazed than before. How had she divined that such, at that very moment, were his thoughts? Should he justify his infidelity? Deny it he could not with truth; and pride or a better feeling forbade a falsehood. The lady saw his perplexity; and her light laugh rang through the apartment. Such a laugh!

"There was nothing on earth so sweet,
Save the music, the mirth, the soft touch of the hand,
And the twinkling of fairies' feet"

"I will have no arguments: they convince none;" and she

waved her hand as a playful order. "A Moore or a Hemans would fail to convert you."

Who could resist her? Gloom, scorn, anger, ill-humour, all fled before her witching gaiety; and he said earnestly:

"They might fail—but you shall win me from my heresy."

"Oh no! you have none of the elements to become '*bon catholique*.' I shall only inflict a penance: you shall give me the account of Italy you cheated me out of the other evening."

He took a seat beside her; and there, in the deep twilight, with the pale lightning ever and anon gleaming upon them, and revealing to each the almost dazzling animation of the one, and the rapt attention of the other, she drank in the tale of his thoughts and his feelings as he trod the land of the Roman, and sighed over its departed glory. To one less imbued with the spirit of beauty, and the enthusiasm of genius than was Helen, his words, glowing and fervent as they were, might have seemed dull "as a twice-told tale," but to her they were as a spell, and an enchantment. Whilst giving utterance, now to the splendid inspirations, and anon to the pathetic wailings of his noble spirit, as the glories of the past, or the desolation of the present, rose or faded before his view, all other things were forgotten, and he seemed to soar above this earth. Even the beautiful being who sat beside him, looking up into his face, spell-bound by his eloquence, was scarcely thought of. She, who had shrunk from even a transient glance of those speaking eyes, now met their full gaze calmly and fearlessly; for even the depth of her rich loveliness at that moment passed unheeded by.

One, light and vain, might have felt piqued at this utter forgetfulness of her beauty, but to Helen this very forgetfulness was a deeper and more dangerous flattery. It told that, for the time at least, he had renounced his heresy, and hurried away by her attention and his own eloquence, felt, rather than acknowledged, the sympathy of thought between them. Feeling the power of the spell that bound her, was it wise after those fearful glimpses of his character and temper, to yield herself to its influence? still to sit beside him? still to listen to his glowing words? till all the realities around her faded from her view, and she only saw as he saw, and felt as he felt. Was this wise?—was this prudent? "*Je hais les gens qui ont toujours raison*," as Madame de Sevigné says. I beg pardon of the moralists, but hope to redeem my character hereafter. How could we write romances if all were to act as they should? and, still worse, who would read them?

Besides she was but twenty, and there are not many Percy Dormers in the world.

Candles were brought; the light glared on their eyes unpleasantly for a moment; then those eyes became accustomed to the difference, and the circumstance was forgotten. The tea equipage made its appearance; the rest of the party assembled; yet still were ancient Rome and modern Italy pictured in their contrasts; and still was Helen's attention earnest and undivided.

"Tourment, *mon cher*, *l'apportez*," said lady Catherine, despatching her favourite after a ball of lambswool which had rolled, not accidentally as Alford thought, towards the unobservant pair. Tourment not only obeyed, but like some overzealous diplomatists, exceeded the limits of his order; for having been at enmity with Mr. Dormer ever since his arrival, he availed himself of this opportunity to seize on that gentleman's heel, whilst apparently engaged in hunting for the ball. Mr. Dormer started from his seat to punish the culprit, no new offender, but Tourment was too quick for him, and almost before he had risen, the pampered favourite was snarling defiance from the lap of his mistress.

A muttered curse escaped his lips; rage flashed from his dark eyes; and striding to the sofa, he fronted Lady Catherine, and half extended an arm to snatch the criminal even from its sanctuary. The petted insolent ceased its snarling, and crouched and quailed beneath that fiery look; a fair and rounded arm was thrown rather hastily round him, and the lady tried to meet that dark and angry gaze with one of equal fire: but it might not be, and for a moment she bent over the dog to hide her discomfiture; then rallying she turned towards Helen, with as unconcerned a manner as she could assume (and Lady Catherine Alford might have been a pupil of Talleyrand himself) and in a tone of pretended rapture exclaimed:

"What a model for a Jupiter Tonans Mr. Dormer would make at this moment! Oh, that Canova were but here!"

She ventured to look up as she finished speaking, but the expression of that stern face made even her tremble, and she instinctively held the dog more firmly. A muttered half-suppressed sound, of which none could catch the meaning, was heard, and then the gentleman stalked from the apartment. Not a look, not a movement had been lost upon Helen. She lingered in the obscurity of the window for some minutes, and then, with a deep sigh, took her station at the tea-table.

"Do not look so distressed at the disturbance of your tête-

à-tête, my dear," said Catherine, out of humour with herself and every one else, and unable to triumph even in the success of her stratagem. "To console you, here is a French proverb which will suit your powers of acting to the shadow of a shade. It will require no further practice, and you and Mr. Dormer shall perform it to-morrow for our edification, *selon la nature*; or *con amore*, as my brother's tutor taught me. To-night was but the rehearsal, I conclude," and, as she spoke, she handed a slip of paper to Helen, on which was written, "*Chateau qui parle, et femme qui écoute, tous deux vont se rendre.*"

"Agreed," said Alford, who had read it over her shoulder, before Helen could reply, "Provided you afterwards enact: "*Les chiens aboient à la lune, mais la lune n'en brille pas moins.*"

Catherine looked a little abashed, but Helen, forgetting the provocation she had received, answered kindly:

"They are both clever proverbs, but having no meaning applicable to ourselves, we could neither of us I am sure enact them *con amore*."

Catherine was touched by her forbearance, and whispered, "You are too good. I do not deserve this."

"Then grant me a boon," said her friend, playfully.

"Name it."

"Let me take Tourment to your dressing-room."

The dog was surrendered, and she had scarcely returned from her mission ere Mr. Dormer re-entered the apartment. Lord Marston soon deserted an absorbing pamphlet for a game of chess with Helen, which Alford looked over; Lady Marston had retired before; and Lady Catherine and Mr. Dormer both held books in their hands.

CHAPTER VIII.

Dire d'un homme colére, inégal, querelleux, chagrin, pointilleux, capricieux, c'est son humeur, n'est pas l'excuser, comme on le croit; mais avouer sans y penser, que de si grands défauts sont irrémédiables.

CARACTÈRES DE LA BRUYÈRE.

Nothing was heard at the breakfast-table, the next morning, but canvass an hustings; High Sheriff and Under Sheriff; Whig, Tory, and Radical; blue, orange, and purple; Catholic.

lic Emancipation and Reform in Parliament ; Currency, Corn Laws, and Commerce. Helen only received a muttered salutation from the usually over punctilious Earl, as he stayed for an instant a prosing discussion on the party politics of the County, and considered herself highly favoured in receiving a half absent, half polite bow, from the more noble and ambitious Dormer. Alford, the mischief-loving Alford, was dividing his time between the discussion of coffee, ham, rolls, and eggs, with a garniture of Scotch marmalade ; mystifying his father and friend with county divisions and coalitions, as edifying as true ; sparring with his sister, and complimenting Helen.

Breakfast being hurried over, the gentlemen mounted their horses to canvass for their favourite candidate, Lord Marston having insisted on his son's accompanying them, much against his inclination.

"See the penalty of wisdom," said Alford, making a doleful face as he prepared to follow his friend. "They are aware I am the only sane one of the party, and therefore insist on my presence. Woe is me ! I think I shall play fool for the future to avoid such inflictions."

"Rather attempt a more novel part," said his sister ironically ; "the motley has brought you but little profit hitherto."

"I leave my character in your hands, Helen," he replied good humouredly, too much accustomed to Catherine's caustic speeches to heed them. "I know you will extend your protection over the innocent."

"Nay !" said she, laughing, "you are well qualified to defend yourself ; Wisdom can need no protector."

"Ay ! but her ægis is a Gorgon's head, and methinks I would rather play the fool, and win defence from a fairer face."

"But fair faces may deceive as well as fair words, and I shall be obliged to play Gorgon to look flatterers into silence ;" and then she added, more earnestly, "Lay aside your intention of playing the fool, and enact the wise man for this day at least."

"As I have done this morning ?" he enquired archly.

"Oh no ! How can you, to say the thing prettily, allow your imagination such play ?"

"That is, in plain English, how can I tell such lies ?" Then, indulging in a loud laugh, he continued—"The look of consternation, when I talked of the coalition between Blue and Orange ! Own it was inimitable, Helen !"

"It was your father !" said Helen, gravely.

He felt the rebuke, and pressing her hand, said, "You are a dear good thing; and blame so sweetly that I must try to mend;" then, relapsing into something of his former humour, he added, "Yet must not I seem too wise, or the most honourable the Earl of Marston will set me up for the county."

"No fear of your over-wisdom, or its consequences," interrupted his sister; "even parental blindness only thinks you fit to represent an impure borough."

"Thanks for your good word! I may always reckon on that. 'Now fare ye well my ladies gay!' and pray Helen, have an epitaph ready on my return, for a whole day of wisdom and canvassing would prove fatal to the 'Undying One' himself."

"What a fuss about representing the great unpaid, and the little paid; the dabblers in politics, pensions, and perfumery; and the dabblers in diplomacy, dirt, and dependence. Now shall I have to bow and smile to every ragamuffin, that shall please to touch his hat for the next month, to keep up my prudent papa's county influence; nay, I should not wonder if I were expected to undergo a round of sillabubs at some of the topping farmers, as they are called; and to talk of the poultry and dairy, cocks, hens, and goslings, cream, curd, and cheese, with their wives and daughters. I wish our late much beloved, highly respected, and ever-to-be-lamented county member, Mr. Penton, of Penton Place, as the Chronicle hath it, had been kind enough, instead of dying three days since, to defer his death till I had been in town, some hundred miles from this greasy multitude. Pity me, Helen!" said Catherine.

"Rather pity Mr. Penton's wife and children, who have sustained an almost irreparable loss."

"It is of no use to lecture me, Helen; and with all your striving to look grave, you cannot forbear a smile at my undergoing the sillabubs."

"Such an idea would excuse Diogenes himself; and I fear I am always ready for a laugh."

"Why, you are a good-natured monitress I must allow; or I should quite detest you for a puritan. And now, to amuse ourselves without the gentlemen."

The canvassing party returned late, looked vexed, harassed, and weary. Dinner being an hour beyond the usual time, was almost enough to account for the discomfiture of the ultra precise Lord Marston; but, as she passed Alford in going into dinner, Helen heard him say to his sister,—“If you

can resist being severe and provoking, for once do play *l'amiable*; for Dormer is like 'a lum in a lowe,' as an old Scotch freeholder told him, and my father's humour is more likely to increase than quench the conflagration; so, for all our sakes, be agreeable."

Helen looked at Dormer, and saw, with pain, marks of ill-suppressed passion and chafed pride, so plainly visible as to induce Catherine to attend to her brother's request. Fortunately the dinner had suffered little from the delay, and the endeavours of Helen, Catherine, and Alford, not only prevented an explosion of wrath, but even appeared to have quieted, in some degree, the displeasure of the Earl and his guest, when a sudden piece of intelligence destroyed all the good their united efforts had effected.

The Earl had given orders to be made acquainted with any thing that might be heard concerning the election; and, in obedience to this mandate, the butler informed his Lordship that hand-bills were issuing by Mr. Smug, of Smug Park, announcing his having consented, in compliance with the wishes of a numerous band of friends, to take upon himself the arduous but honourable duty of representing the county of —; and soliciting the votes of the honest, incorruptible, and highly intelligent freeholders of the said county.

Mr. Smug, of Smug Park, a representative for the county of —! A Manchester manufacturer, who had been in the county but two years; had built an enormous house, like the manufactory in which he had made his fortune. One who, at least, so said the Earl, ever took delight in crossing and thwarting the aristocracy of the country, and out-doing in splendid, if not tasteful magnificence, the most noble and eminent families! Was this to be? Forbid it all the blood of all the Marstons! At first the Earl seemed stunned by the immensity of the presumption; then, urged to exertion by the fearfulness of the peril, he rose from his seat, and, whilst the elevation of outraged nobility almost gave dignity to his usually common-place appearance, he poured forth a rather violent and lengthy address to the nobility, gentry, and freeholders of the county of —, on the degradation of allowing themselves to be represented by Mr. Smug, of Smug Park; a Manchester manufacturer! a printer of cottons! a weaver of calicoes! a thing of muslins and long cloths, power-loom and cotton velvets! a *parvenu*! a *nouveau riche*! a man without a father, since he boasted of being the founder of his family. "Shall such a blot on the honour of our county be endured?"

said his Lordship in conclusion. "Such a stain on its fame! Will the Howards, and the De Veres, and the St. Maurs, and the Throgmortons, and the other noble families of the country, who can trace up from father to son, from generation to generation, vail before a low-born artizan, a radical upstart, who talks of decreased taxation and amended corn laws? Never! never! rather let us contest the point to the last drop of our blood. Let the noble and the high-born, and the clear-judging, unite with heart and hand in the common and patriotic purpose of saving the county from such foul disgrace. Yes; let us show to the world the falsehood of his assertion, that he yields to the wishes of a band of friends. The eyes of all England are upon us, and our country expects that every man will do his duty."

With this sublime climax his Lordship concluded; and having forgotten, in the ardour of his harangue, that he had not been addressing a county meeting, looked round for applause. Surprise, which it pleased him to interpret into admiration, was strongly depicted on every countenance. Never had the Earl displayed so much eloquence and force of language; for never before, after a speech of five minutes, had even his most ingenious listeners been able to decide on what were his real wishes. But then, how could he fail to be eloquent on such a subject? The only pity was that the speech had not been made at the County Hall, addressed to a County meeting, and reported in a County paper. All were silent, and the speaker sat down with a self-satisfied air, remembering to have read somewhere, that silence is the most flattering applause from thinking minds.

"Weave the warp, and weave the woof,
The winding-sheet of Sming's vile race;
Give ample room and verge enough
The manufacturer's fate to trace!"

exclaimed Lord Alford, with a theatrical tone and air.

"Will you never be serious on serious things," said his father angrily, who just imagined it possible some ridicule might be couched in the lines, notwithstanding their pompous delivery; then turning to his guest, he said, "What plan do you recommend, Mr. Dormer, to crush this audacious upstart?"

"The leaving him to his contemptibility. Our notice would do him too much honour;" replied that lordly gentleman, with a look that would have annihilated twenty manufacturers of uninsured lives.

"Yes! perhaps so—but I should have thought—that is I should have imagined—yet I cannot say—doubtless you know best,"—replied his questioner, freed in some degree from his former excitement, and sinking back into his usual doubtful and prosing strain.

"I tremble for the fate of the future Mrs. Dormer; even I should perish beneath such a look," remarked Catherine in an under-tone, fixing Helen's attention on *le fier*.

"The future Mrs. Dormer must abide her fate, if she choose to provoke it," replied our heroine pointedly.

"Tourment, my darling, don't lap all the cream; and without strawberries too!" said his mistress, turning abruptly to her favourite, who had taken advantage of her inattention to help himself to some of the dessert dainties.

"Order some more cream, Alford; and do, Catherine, teach your dog to be less troublesome;" remarked Lady Marston, gently sighing as she thought how little her admonitions were heeded.

"*Pauvre Tourment*," said her daughter, carelessly, as though she had not heard her mother's reproof. "Politics are dry things, to be sure, so no wonder you are thirsty."

"They are things of which women can know nothing," remarked her father, in what he meant for a tone of dignified reproof.

"Never, papa?" assuming a look of simplicity. "I thought I had heard of some old women having places in the Cabinet?"

Lord Marston was horrified at such a scandal, and hastened to reprove his daughter for listening to such false and idle tales. It pleased Catherine to put on a humble and submissive look; and the Earl, after a moment's pause, turned to Helen.

"For my part I hate idle tales." This was not true, for like all weak-minded people, he had a taste for gossiping; and a hint of a frown on a favourite, or a smile on a *chassé*, or a delicate morceau of court scandal, was as oil to the lamp of his mind; but then such things were to be contradicted in all grades below his own, and only hinted in mysterious whispers even among the privileged class. To return to his Lordship's speech, lest the digression should be thought as prosy as his harangue.

"I think all high-minded people should decidedly contradict them."

This was a favourite phrase with the Earl, who, as plain people desire to be thought handsome, and silly ones clever, had the ambition to be considered high-minded and decided.

Another digression ! Once more I sue for pardon ! It shall be :

“ A brotherless hermit, the last of his race.”

“ Holding such things in abhorrence as I do, I could not but be very much distressed—indeed greatly shocked—at finding that some one had presumed, falsely I am sure ; but still had presumed to hint at your name in connection with a most extraordinary—indeed, I may say a most audacious report. I concluded instantly, nay I felt convinced that there could be no truth in the story ; and I determined instantly, as all high-minded people should do, to contradict it decidedly ; and accordingly I said, I felt assured, nay I was almost convinced, that if not absolutely false, there must be some misapprehension in the matter ; and that I should take the liberty, or rather do you the kindness to speak to you on the subject.”

Here he paused, as expecting a reply, and Helen, who, though aware of his talent for making great things out of small, was really rather startled at this fearful exordium, felt herself obliged to thank him for his high-minded decision in contradicting the report, and request to know its purport.

“ I am much distressed to be the bearer of such a tale ; but I think, and I imagine, you will agree with me that it will be less painful to you to hear it from my lips, than from those of others ; and I have only to add, I shall be happy to assist with my counsel how best to silence the report.”

His lordship paused again, but Helen, too anxious to learn the extent of her peril to delay him by questions, only bowed, and he proceeded.

“ To one less gifted than yourself, I should have thought some preparation necessary ; but high-minded and decided as I know you to be, I deemed it needless to waste time in breaking the matter to you cautiously, but have hastened to lay the report before you at once, without preparation or circumlocution ; premising that, though I heard it from the person himself, I did not give it the slightest credit ; that is, I doubted it, as all high-minded people would do, until I heard it from yourself. It is, I am informed, most scandalously asserted, though of course without truth, that you are going to place Robert Neale, that great poacher and insolent vagabond, in a cottage on your estate.”

As his lordship stated the report with all due emphasis, he looked at Helen to see if she felt as much horror as himself. It was with some difficulty that she could prevent herself from laughing, so little had his pompous manner and sublime intro-

duction prepared her for such an insignificant catastrophe ; but it was a rare thing indeed for Helen St. Maur to forget what was due to the feelings of others, so resisting the temptation, and shunning Alford's mischievous look, she bent to pick up her glove, thus veiling the smile at her own fears, and then answered with her usual sweetness and tolerable gravity :

" I fear, indeed, as your lordship justly observes, that there has been much misapprehension on the subject. I certainly have promised to allow Robert Neale to occupy one of my cottages for the next year, at least ; but I did not give that promise till after many enquiries, which left me convinced he was innocent of the charges made against him. I will be surety for his good behaviour for the next twelve months ; so that I trust that you need entertain no fear for your hares and pheasants."

" Miss St. Maur," said the Earl pompously, as though his words must annihilate every doubt, " Robert Neale was convicted of poaching by the Bench of Magistrates, and sentenced by them to imprisonment."

" Yes ! but then no mortal judge is infallible ; and circumstances have come out since, which make me believe him innocent of the charge, and that his accuser was actuated by evil motives to speak falsely. It was his doing a service to that very accuser, and my considering him as an unfortunate man, that induced me to allow him a shelter on my estate. I cannot blame him for not selling his little freehold ; one of the charges brought against him. You know," she added playfully, " we women are not expected to exhibit all that wisdom and consistency that is looked for from statesmen and legislators ; we have a patent for being capricious and fanciful. Allow this, if you please, to pass as a fancy on my part ; for I fear there is no hope of clearing my protégé's fame at present. At any rate, he suffered for his crime, real or supposed ; and none should be punished twice."

Here, in obedience to a look from the lady of the house, she rose to adjourn to the drawing-room, but the Earl requesting a few minutes' audience, she found herself obliged to remain whilst he favoured her with one of his long and prosy harangues, of which she understood little, save that magistrates could not err, and that poachers should be considered as under a ban, more cruel than the excommunications of the superstitious ages. The previous part of the ill-understood dissertation was forgotten in its concluding sentence, delivered

in an angry and triumphant tone. "He is a poacher, a vagabond, and an ungrateful rascal, for he has declared he will vote against your desire at the election."

"How can your lordship, or Robert Neale, know what is my desire?" inquired Helen, displeased at finding her name had been used.

The Earl looked amazed at the question. "Of course we all know your wishes. We consider you as one of us from your ancient family, though without a title," this was said with a patronizing air, "and we are all for Mordaunt. But you will have no trouble about the matter; I and Euston will manage every thing for you. Only order your steward to send that Neale a notice not to come on your grounds; tell him you do this because he votes against your wishes, and none of your other tenants will prove refractory, I dare say. Indeed, sure of your approval, we told the pestilent fellow, that if you had really promised him the cottage before, he must now look out for one somewhere else."

"And what said he?"

"He had the insolence to doubt our words, and to say he would only believe it from your own lips; and that, let what would come of it, he should vote as he liked. It is most fortunate, my dear young lady, he has shown himself so soon, or he might have caused you much trouble. Ladies are easily imposed on; but send the warnings and all will be well."

"Pardon me, my lord," replied Helen indignantly; "I cannot break my word, pledged for former merit; and I am very sorry my name should have been coupled with the election."

"Do I understand you?" exclaimed the Earl, in a tone of most unaristocratic wonder. "You will have all your other tenants in rebellion, if you do not make an example of this man."

"If you mean by rebellion, each giving his vote as his own conscience may dictate, I feel no dread from such conduct."

Lord Marston's amazement deprived him of the power of speech; but Mr. Dormer's anger had no such silencing effect upon him, and he spoke in a tone of haughty courtesy, and ill-repressed violence, that showed he had by no means recovered the control of his temper.

"If you will consider for one moment, Miss St. Maur, I am sure you will see the necessity of checking the insolence of the mob; or the ensuing Parliaments will be composed of half-educated demagogues, and uneducated radicals. His

lordship's plan is the only one you can pursue. You, as a lady, can know nothing of these matters; we will manage every thing; and you be spared all trouble, but receiving Mr. Mordaunt's thanks. The rebellious spirit of the times must be checked, or the noble of the land will be expected to bow and cringe before the rabble; and tenants must be taught to respect the wishes of their landlords. The sheltering of Neale would be a personal insult to Lord Marston and myself, and might be dangerous to you; as some minds are too turbulent to be softened even by the thought of woman's weakness. You really must send the notice."

There was a something so overbearing and ungenerous in this speech, and it was delivered in such a haughty, tone, that Helen was shocked and indignant; and yet she sighed as, looking steadily at the speaker, she answered coldly:

"There are indeed some minds too turbulent to be softened even by woman's weakness; but I may not act unjustly from the fear of further insult:" then turning from Mr. Dormer, whose flashing eye and changing cheek showed how ill he brooked her words, she spoke decidedly, but courteously to the Earl.

"I am no admirer of female politicians; home is a woman's sphere, and she should soften, not exasperate party spirit: thus, owning my inferiority, your lordship is at perfect liberty to consider my conduct as weakness or caprice; but holding large landed property, with neither father or brother, I am peculiarly situated; and can only act as I think my dear father would have acted had he been spared me, and the charge of injustice or harshness never tainted his name."

"Your cousin will act for you."

"Pardon me; I love my cousin, but I act for myself. As former legislators have decided that small freeholders have sufficient judgment to enable them to give a proper vote, I see no right I can have to tempt them by threat or promise to vote against their consciences. The same liberty of opinion we claim for ourselves, it is but just to grant to them. We cannot take away their responsibility to their God, how then may we presume to tempt them to evil? He acts ill who does evil that good may come of it; and the purity of his principles must be doubted, who would persuade us he seeks power but for his country's good, and yet would win that power by guile or menace. My tenants shall be informed of my wishes; but, at the same time, of their own perfect freedom, for not a dependent of mine shall suffer for opinion. I

am grieved at what I have to say concerning Mr. Mordaunt, but it would be unfair to allow you to suppose I can wish him success. His private conduct is so notorious as to render it impossible to be concealed even from female ears, and consequently, to favour or to aid him in the slightest degree is entirely out of the question."

"Thanks for your lecture, and where may we look for Miss St. Maur's immaculate member?" inquired Mr. Dormer scornfully, for the Earl was too much astounded to speak.

"I may be something of a visionary," replied our heroine, with calm dignity, that contrasted strongly with his intemperate violence; "but I should blush for my native county, could it not furnish a more worthy representative."

"Mr. Smug, of Smug Park, for instance!"

"I cannot allow such a libel on the county of ———; though Mr. Smug, of Smug Park, as a specimen of honest industry, merits respect, not ridicule; and I am grieved to find that Mr. Dormer can allow politics to deaden nobler feelings. If you send one to Parliament who openly outrages his duty to his God, how can you expect he will do his duty to his country? Mr. Howard, or Sir William de Vere, would unite the suffrages of the good and the wise. Neale must apologize for his conduct, and, though, having my promise for his former behaviour, I do not think myself justified in retracting it, he shall be made aware the past shall furnish no indemnity for the future."

"Not at my request I beg, Miss St. Maur;" said Mr. Dormer still more haughtily. "Believe me, I wish no apologies from insolent labourers."

"As you please," she replied coldly, as she left the room to prevent all further discussion.

Neither Lord Marston or Mr. Dormer appeared during the evening; the former sent an excuse by Alford, on the plea of being overpowered by business, whilst the latter disdained any excuse whatever.

"A Parisian *souvenir* for your thoughts, my pretty play-fellow," said Alford to Helen, as she sat alone in the drawing-room, her thoughts employed on any subject rather than the book before her.

She started from her reverie, sighed, and then recovering herself, endeavoured to answer gaily:

"Agreed! I was thinking if there were no sun without a spot, no diamond without a flaw."

"Tut!" replied her companion, in a vexed tone, at no diffi-

culty to guess her meaning. "What then, a sun is a sun despite its spots; and a diamond, despite its flaw; and both the monarchs of their kinds. You have been looking through Catherine's microscope, or telescope, whichever it may be; remember the focus cannot be the same for all."

"You pay my penetration an ill compliment; there are some spots and flaws so glaring that the uncouched might discover them. A flaw in a diamond destroys its value in the eyes of a judicious lapidary, and the spots in the sun—"

"As spots on ermine beautify the rest," interrupted Alford.

"Not so! they deface its beauty, and weaken its power."

"Nonsense! it is only a few over-wise people who have discovered the spots, and they have been there for years, and done no harm. Give me a contrast; what you call harmony is like a calm at sea. The spots will never hurt. You need not see them."

"I fear I am one of the over-wise! And who can say that those spots may not in time transform the sun into a fiery comet, with the will and the power to destroy."

"That is a new discovery in natural philosophy, on which I cannot pretend to decide," said he gaily, in answer to her laughing and laughable supposition. "But you need not fear; the comet would never injure you."

"Not if I keep out of the range of its fiery tail, which it is my intention to do; as well as to receive your future reports with caution. You have either been unusually blind, or wilfully silent. I suspect the latter."

"You are unreasonable! How can the noble and high-spirited lion be expected to show the apathetic forbearance of the turnspit? 'Tis a noble animal after all."

"What does his shrieking victim say?"

"*Oh! c'est selon les règles! c'est son humeur!*"

"*Je préfère, sans hésiter, l'âne qui porte sa charge, au lion qui dévore les hommes.* Now, on your honour, as you would not injure the innocent, was Neale as insolent as was represented?"

He turned away from her penetrating look, and was silent.

"I understand, and sympathise with your regret. Of course he will have my cottage."

"I know no reason why he should not."

"Thank you for this candour."

All that evening did Alford strive to raise his friend in Helen's estimation; for he never for one moment doubted that, once united, her sweetness would soften his impetuosity.

She listened with evident pleasure to the noble traits he related, and yet he doubted if her former opinion was changed.

Dormer, notwithstanding a hint from his friend, showed no wish that the past should be forgotten, but met Helen the next morning, and allowed her to depart with a haughty bow, and a cold good morning. Accustomed to command obedience, admiration, and love, he held it beneath him to sue for either. A little attention, and a few kind enquiries, made principally for the sake of Lady Marston, soon reinstated Helen in the opinion of the Earl. The news of the morning, that Mr. Mor-daunt did not intend to stand, and that Mr. Howard was likely to be returned without opposition, tended not a little to promote his Lordship's good humour. But the case was different with regard to Mr. Dormer; no such motive induced her to endeavour to conciliate him; and, feeling an apology was due to her for his violence, she merely treated him with cold politeness, and a scrupulous avoidance of all reference to the past.

As Helen proceeded homewards, the events of the last few days passed in review before her. It was less than one little week that she had spent at Marston, and what feelings and emotions, what harmonies and contradictions, what lights and shadows, what pains and pleasures, had not been crowded into that short space of time. It had been a week of strong excitement, of splendid enchantment, awakening sympathies of which she had scarcely dreamt; giving life to feelings that perhaps it would have been better for her should never have existed. It was living years in a few fleeting hours; and feeling and knowing that those hours, swiftly as they passed, might change and characterize her whole life. Passion was striving to ruffle the holy calm of her bosom, as the storm disturbs the serenity of the placid ocean; and even whilst she felt, she almost wished she could shut her eyes against the danger.

She had heard Dormer's praises from his friend, till he had become unconsciously her *beau idéal*—the model, in her imagination, of all that man should be. Their two first interviews had something in them to interest a romantic mind; and her cousin's violence had but made her think the more of the stranger. But what then? Had Dormer been like other men, she would only have felt disappointment from Alford's extravagant praise and the waste of her own brilliant imaginings, whilst the hero of the church-yard and the village

bridge would have only held the same estimation in her mind as others had done before.

But Percy Dormer was not like other men; there was mind in every thing he said or did; he was a *Salvator Rosa*, "*tutto fresco, spirito, e bile*." One of those rare beings one may chance to meet once in our lives; and of whom one may say, with the exactitude of common-place, that, "take him all in all, we shall ne'er look upon his like again." A fiery planet must have presided at his birth. His friends might have called him, "A comet in splendour and light;" his enemies would have added, "The herald of darkness and care."

It may be guessed how dangerous such a person was likely to become to the peace of mind of a being possessed of Helen's brilliant imagination, passionate admiration of genius, and strong affections, heralded as he had been by the lavish praises of his friend. His passionate enthusiasm, soaring to the sublime, contrasted with the paltry gossip and petty nothings of the common herd; his splendid talents and his daring ambition, which ever appeared to have something noble as its aim, were all calculated to win her, wearied as she was with the inane adulations of the sordid and the silly. The flattery of the lips she despised; by the flattery of the heart she had as yet been untouched; but no one was more open to the flattery of the mind.

Could he have played the hypocrite, had she seen him only in his brilliant moods—the effect might have been too dazzling to have been withstood, and she might have left Marston without the wish or power of consideration; but she had seen him in his darker moods, when passion marred the splendour of his character, and the blame and the sorrow must rest on herself, if she should still allow that splendour to dazzle her.

The beautiful woods through which she passed were unheeded, for Helen's mind was dwelling on Mr. Dormer's "Graphic Sketches" of Rome and Italy, and, in the sympathy of their tastes on such subjects, she forgot his violence, and the coldness of their parting. As she passed through her own lodge-gate, Neale advanced to the carriage, and humbly begging her pardon for stopping her, told his version of the scene of the day before; his regret at being obliged to vote against her wishes, as Mr. Smug had formerly saved him from starving; and concluded by asking if he must look out for a cottage elsewhere. She soon set the matter to rights, and sent the man back to his work with a happy heart. To revert to her former brilliant visions was beyond her power.

The man's tale had stripped Mr. Dormer's character of much of its fancied splendour ; and shown, that with the virtues of the Romans, on whose noble deeds he dwelt with so much enthusiasm, he mingled their pride and contempt for those beneath him, as well in mind as in station. The Romans had no better guide than the light of nature ; and the glory of their virtues may almost blind us to their errors. Mr. Dormer lived under a holier law ; and as that light was brighter, so were the sins committed under it the greater. His fate was set for good or ill ; a splendid example or a fearful warning. With passions too strong for mere human control, and pride too overweening to man to be humble with his God, "he was a form of brass with feet of clay." Helen thought of all these things, and she breathed a passionate wish, that the last week, with all its hopes and fears, splendour and gloom, could be swept for ever from her memory. Then, after a while, she smiled at her own folly, and pursued a wiser course.

Mrs. Hargrave found her as cheerful and attentive as ever, and her Sunday scholars on the morrow proved her to be as patient and indefatigable as usual ; but she herself was aware that she sought occupation as a duty rather than a pleasure ; and that, despite that occupation, she could not always prevent herself from thinking how, where, and when would chance her next meeting with Mr. Dormer. Such speculations were doomed soon to end in certainty, for on the third day after her return, as she was walking-home from the village, she was joined by Alford and his friend, who, giving their horses to the groom, announced their intention of being her escort. Their meeting had been so unexpected she had had no time to determine on her reception of Mr. Dormer ; whilst his animated delight had been so apparent that she had allowed him unchecked, almost unconsciously, to take and press that hand which Alford had placed in his, saying, to him only would he resign it.

Mr. Dormer was in one of his most brilliant moods ; his eye looked a softer flattery, his usually lordly tone had more of musical sweetness, his sentiments were grand and noble, and had he breathed but one word of sorrow for the past, all that had been might have been forgotten. Yet was not Helen quite blinded by the present to the warning of the past, the risk and danger of the future ; if, seeing the peril, she chose to encounter it, the shame and punishment rest on her own head.

Alford came with a message from his father, to request she would ensure as goodly a cortège of respectable freeholders as possible to attend Mr. Howard on the day of nomination, and alarm Mr. Smug from the troubles of a contested election. Compliance was readily promised; the more so, as her tenants on hearing her wishes had declared theirs to be the same; and added, that if not, rather than vote contrary to her wishes, they would not have voted at all, so fully did they appreciate her conduct. The Earl had heard this, and she had risen in his estimation accordingly. As the election was spoken of, Helen looked at Mr. Dormer, wishing him to understand she expected an apology. He turned away from her glance; and if he felt that an apology were due, he did not seem the more inclined to make it. She saw this disinclination; and felt the error had not been regretted, though he might wish her to forget it." A spirited conversation ensued, till they came to a narrow stream that welled from beneath a little brake, and ran deeply and darkly within its thickly wooded banks.

"Is this Lethe?" inquired Alford, as he handed Helen across the rustic bridge; "if so I must taste its waters to banish all recollection of this horrid election, for I am bored to death with it. Where shall I find a fairy's acorn cup?"

"Will Miss St. Maur allow me to present her with a draught, that she also may forget all that was unpleasant concerning this election?" enquired Mr. Dormer, in a tone that should have been more earnest and more humble to ensure success; but his pride forbade. He thought he had stooped more than sufficient, she thought he had scarcely stooped at all, and answered under this impression; besides, she could not forget that his conduct about Neale had shown more than a sudden burst of ill temper.

"It would be as unwise as impossible to pour the waters of oblivion over one subject alone; the Lethean draught must banish the remembrance of all or of none."

"What mean you? Would you willingly erase from your memory every occurrence of the past week? A week that has been to me what no week was before or ever can be again?" and as he spoke he took her hand, and looked earnestly and enquiringly into her face.

Her eyes sank beneath his ardent gaze, and the colour deepened on her cheek; but she withdrew her hand, and answered steadily and calmly, "I cannot think my former saying unwise; all should be erased from the memory, or none."

"Must pains and pleasures always be remembered together? Or would you give me to understand there was nothing pleasurable wherewith to burden your memory?"

She could not but be touched by the increasing earnestness of his manner, though more of pride mingled with it; and her tone had something melancholy in it as she answered, "Much, very much of pleasure, but it may be more of pain; and it is fitting both should be remembered to enable the mind to judge aright."

There could be no mistaking her meaning; and her very sorrow and candour, the opposite to anger, galled him more than any vehemence of offence could possibly have done, and all his pride and haughtiness blazed boldly forth.

"Be it as you wish, lady; I have no longer the desire, as I possess not the power, to alter your decision. Let the waters of Lethe, then, roll over the events of the past week, and our acquaintance date from now:" and he walked on, and joined Alford, who, seeing them engaged in earnest conversation, had kept aloof. His clouded brow told his friend, without words, that the conference had not ended as he wished; but too wise and too delicate to ask questions, he only exerted himself the more to relieve both, and turning to wait for Helen, addressed her gaily:

"Besides my father's message, I have to present a humble petition from Catherine, and, as she declares she will attribute a failure to a want of eloquence on our parts, we will neither admit of excuse or refusal. There is to be a grand picnic on Thursday week in Feldon Park, and as my father insists on Catherine's going, she is as peremptory in ordering your attendance."

"A very humble petition truly! It may rather be designated an absolute command, only to be disobeyed at imminent peril; for Catherine is no merciful foe. But what could induce the Earl to insist on her going?"

"Because it is set on foot by Mesdames Carleton and Daniell, to please the daughter of the former; and as their husbands command some votes, and one of the ladies at least is supposed occasionally to command her lord, it is thought politic to condescend to the picnic. Catherine bade me say, she considered it the prologue to the syllabubs, and that go you must, to initiate her into the art of playing popular."

She smiled at the message; but not anxious to meet Mr. Dormer oftener than was necessary, after what had passed,

declined, on the plea of knowing nothing of the Daniells, little of the Carletons, and a fear of catching cold.

"You will not deny your acquaintance with John Carleton, I presume?" said Alfred archly, who was determined to overrule every excuse. "Notwithstanding your cruel rejection, he still proclaims your resemblance to his horse Conqueror, which won at Newmarket, and that he intends riding over to solicit your attendance at the rural refection, as Miss Jones terms it; so you may as well, 'for auld lang syne,' allow me the honour of having won your consent. Come, Dormer, unite your eloquence with mine, and we shall win the victory; engaging to be her *cavalieri serventi*, and to protect her from every danger."

"Pardon me," replied Dormer, haughtily, whilst his bent brows and flashing eyes gave full force to his scornful speech. "Miss St. Maur's resolves are always so reasonable, it would be but a waste of words to strive to change them; nor have I the presumption to imagine my wishes would possess the slightest influence. I must also decline the honourable office of *cavalier servente*, as business will call me to town before the appointed day."

Alford looked aghast at this unexpected and insulting violence; and Helen, hurt and wounded, answered warmly:

"Do not fear, Mr. Dormer, the being pressed into such an ungracious service, or allow the dead to prevent your attending the party; for should I claim my woman's privilege of change, and go, no danger should induce me to trouble you for protection."

He felt the just rebuke of her words and Alford's looks; but too proud and angry to make an apology, only repeated the necessity of going to town; a necessity, as both were aware, discovered within the last five minutes. His friend's gaiety again came to his relief.

"Here comes John Carleton on his horse Conqueror; so yield you at discretion, *ma belle*!"

"Only save me from 'my son John and his horse Conqueror,' and I will attend a pic-nic at the Antipodese," was Helen's laughing reply; Dormer's intended absence having taken away her objection, as well as her wish for the party.

She turned into another path as she spoke, unwilling that even the obtuse John Carleton should have a chance of perceiving Dormer's frown, or her own flushed cheek; and before they reached the house he had taken his departure. Dormer mounted his horse instantly, and refusing alike He-

len's cold but polite invitation, and Alford's whispered entreaties to enter the mansion, rode off, vouchsafing to his fair hostess only the bow and good morning of an almost stranger.

"Helen! Helen!" said Alford, reproachfully, as he lingered a moment, "when will you learn to pity the pangs of *la belle passion*?"

"When will your friend learn to control his temper?"

"When blessed with your hand. Let me but hint a hope, and it will be done."

"Never: it is too late!"

He was surprised at her sad and decided tone; he would have remonstrated, but she kissed her hand in adieu, and entered the house.

CHAPTER IX.

She seemed a splendid angel, newly dress'd,
Save wings, for heaven.

KEATS.

Oh, is thy soul like mountain tide,
That swell'd by winter storm and shower,
Rolls down in turbulence of power
A torrent fierce and wide!

* * * * *

Needs but a buffet, and no more:
The groom lies senseless in his gore.

SCOTT.

On a review of the past, Helen came to the conclusion that Mr. Dormer would make no further effort to see her, at least before the conclusion of this present visit; and we are by no means prepared to assert that the conclusion gave her pleasure—so difficult is it for even strong minds to free themselves from the weakness of regretting the necessary consequences of their own acts! She grieved that the necessity for caution existed; and such is the weakness of our nature, she would probably have rejoiced had any motive, sufficiently powerful to absolve her to her own conscience, induced her to act otherwise. But no such motive was likely to arise, and the warning of her parents to beware how she allowed genius or talents to dazzle her, was present to her mind. It would

almost seem as if they had foreseen the future. Not that her affections were as yet beyond her own control, but the enchantment in his society, the void in his absence, the taunts of Catherine, and the arch looks of Alford, had all shown her that they might soon become so if she indulged in the dangerous excitement. This had induced her to speak more decidedly than she would otherwise have done ; but now that she considered all friendly intercourse at an end between them, she sighed to think that it must be so ; and she sighed still more deeply, to think how passion might mar and taint a noble mind.

Conclusions, though formed on reasonable grounds, are not always correct, and the next day, to Helen's great surprise, and at the first instant to her pleasure, she saw Mr. Dormer on his way to Hurlestone. She was walking in the grounds at some distance, but a glance was enough ; she could not be mistaken. There was a slight struggle, a slight hesitation, and then she turned into a contrary path. He might apologize, though that was doubtful ; but how could she expect him to curb his impetuosity for her, when it had remained unchecked from higher motives, and when even she had been its object more than once. She felt no displeasure towards him, but she felt distrust of herself.

It was late ere she returned to the house ; for his having traversed the woods in every direction had rendered it difficult to avoid a meeting. A note from Lady Marston, about some flowers, had been the avowed motive of his visit ; but Helen suspected, and suspected truly, some other object was in the back ground.

Early on the day before the pic-nic, Helen went to the village to visit the widow Watts, who, from having been a servant of her mother's, was a great favourite. A little wicket opened into a gay but very small flower-garden, before the cottage ; whilst jessamine, roses, sweet-briar, and honeysuckle, covered a rustic porch and the space between the windows. The inside of the cottage was as neat as the hands of the most tidy of housewives could make it, but the dame herself sat in her arm chair, sad and sorrowful, with her spectacles lying on a large Bible, which lay open before her, tear after tear chasing each other down her pale thin cheeks.

" Good morning, dame," said Helen, in a kind winning tone, for her light step, as she passed through the open doorway, roused not the widow from her mournful thoughts.

" God bless you, Miss Helen ! for all your kindness," said

the old woman, rising and placing a chair for her visitor. "It almost makes me happy only to look upon your sweet smile."

"I am come to see if I cannot do more than smile upon you," replied our heroine, with her own sweet cheerfulness, which, bright as it was, never seemed a mockery even to the most miserable. "You were out when I called before, but you must tell me now why you weep, and how I can help you?"

"Oh, Miss Helen! Miss Helen! you have just got your blessed mother's own sweet look and voice, that makes one happy and yet cry too. Oh, if you would but speak to my poor James, perhaps he would mind you. It is breaking my heart, that it is, to see him sitting all day long without speaking a word, only sighing; and leaving all the garden to run to ruin; and only thinking of dying; and taking on so about poor Henry Feller."

"But you must tell me first how it all happened, for when I saw you last you were too ill to talk much."

"Yes, Miss Helen, I was very ill indeed then; but thanks to God, and the doctor, and the nice things you sent me, I am quite well now, only a little weak, or so; and if it would please God to make James smile again, I should be quite happy then. But I have been thinking, since this happened, that 'tis a sad thing for fathers and mothers not to bring their children up in the right way, and now I mind your good mother used to tell me, time after time: 'Ah, Mary Watts, says she, you punish the boy for doing wrong once in twenty times, and let him do wrong without saying any thing the other nineteen. If you never gave him any thing he cried for, but quietly made him do as you told him, you need never punish at all. Then you tell him, when he is in a passion, that the beggar-man, or the chimney-sweep will have him; which he will soon learn to be a story, and then never believe you again; whereas teach him, as soon as possible, his violence will offend a just though merciful God, and you will give him a good motive for a good deed; and should he be tempted to go astray, he may return to the right path in after life.' I remember her words well; but alack-a-day! I never minded to do them; and now I feel it all as she said. To be sure James is as good a lad as ever was in most things, and would not hurt a worm if he warn't in a passion, and then he is as furious as a mad bull. But I am tiring you, Miss Helen, and so I'll tell all about it at once. My James and

Henry Feller was like brothers, even when they was boys, and was always together; and his mother was a widow too, and we had been in the same service once, and so we liked to let them be with one another, and we rather hoped Jane, that's Henry's sister, and my boy would take a liking to each other when they was old enough. They was always together, even when they grew up; and I never knew James in a passion with him, though Henry used to keep on joking and laughing at him by the hour at a time. But a month since James and he was at work together, along with some others, and I don't know how it was, and nobody knows—for my boy himself says he can't tell how it was—unless the evil one put it into his head, for he loved Henry all the time. But somehow or other Henry said something to vex him, and would not give over joking, and so James got in a great passion, and struck him, and Henry fell; and my boy was the first to take him up; and they carried him home, and sent for the doctor, but he only lived nine hours. And oh, Miss Helen, only to think of his having killed one like his own brother in a passion; and all, may be, because I did not teach him better in his youth, and the blood is on both our heads,—and I made him a murderer! Here tears checked the poor woman's utterance.

Helen allowed her to weep for some time without speaking, whilst she too was thinking of the fearful effects of passion, and fancy gave Dormer to her with the look and mien of a Cain, the murderer's brand upon his brow. She shuddered at the thought, then strove to recover her own composure to comfort the weeping widow. Her soothings were not tendered in vain. How could they be?

"Then the fault's all mine, for not teaching him better, and James is not to blame. Oh, do tell him so dear, dear Miss Helen!"

"Not exactly so, Mary. At his age all have the power to subdue the passions, if they apply humbly and sincerely for strength from whence only strength can come; but your injudicious indulgence made the task difficult indeed. Did the young man die without forgiving him, or could not he speak?"

"Yes, he forgave him; and told every one he was sure James meant him no harm, and that his head had struck against a stone as he fell; and then he made James take hold of his mother's and sister's hands, and told him to stand in his place, and be a son and a brother to them; and my poor boy says 'tis this kindness that's killing him. Oh, Miss Helen! do pray speak to him; for you can comfort any body;

he is sitting in his favourite arbour now. Shall I call him?"

"No!" said Helen, the tears standing thick in her beautiful eyes, "we will seek him. But why did he not go to Mr. Norton?"

"He said it was of no use, he knew he was too wicked to be saved; and he mopes, and sighs, and has got so weak, I am sadly afraid he will never recover. He sits all day long in that arbour that Henry and he planted, and he won't have it cut, for he says 'tis fitter for him as it is; and he won't tend to any thing, and 'tis as much as I can keep things a little tidy; and he won't go out to work, for he can't bear to see any one."

They passed through the house, and entered a garden at its back, where they found the young man just as his mother had said.

"Here is Miss Helen come to see you, James."

The wretched young man withdrew his hands from his face, and rose instantly, but evidently with the intention of avoiding the meeting, if possible, but as this could not be done without brushing rudely past Helen, who stood just before him, he was obliged to remain; for not a creature within miles of Hurlestone would have shown her disrespect. But though he still stood before her, his pale face was half turned away, and his trembling limbs plainly spoke his agitation.

"James," said Helen, in a tone which told how much she pitied him, "your flowers always look so gay and so flourishing, you must come and attend to my favourite garden at Hurlestone."

He turned round abruptly, met her look of pity, then glanced at his mother, and understood every thing at once.

"No, no! Miss Helen," he said, in a wild and melancholy tone, "it cannot be—I see my mother has been speaking to you, and I thank you for your kindness, but I could not do a day's work now, even if I would; and I could not bear to be with others, for their looks would tell me, more than I know already, what a wicked creature I am. No, no, no! I can do nothing but lie down at his feet to die;" and he turned away as though the sight of a fellow-creature was hateful to him.

Helen's tears fell as fast as the mother's, but she was not thus to be turned from her kind purpose.

"It is right and natural you should grieve; but not as one without hope. I will not say your guilt was light, even though the deed was done in passion, not malice, and sorrowed for instantly, as that very passion was a crime; but where is the

sinner, however vile, who may not hope for pardon, if he repent and turn to God, trusting in his Saviour's blood alone? I need not tell you of the many instances recorded in that Holy Book, given for our consolation and instruction."

"There may be hope for others; but there can be none for me. He was as my brother; he had never done me wrong." He paused for an instant; as if the recollection had recalled every former pang; and then added, more wildly than ever, as he saw her tears, "Ah, Miss Helen, you can shed tears for me, and I thank you, wicked creature as I am; but I cannot shed them for myself. And what if I could? Can tears, can repentance wash out the stain of blood? Can they bring the dead to life again? I cannot live, and yet I fear to die!"

"The tears of faith and repentance can wash out the stain of blood; and if you cannot give life to the dead, you should seek to repair their loss to the living."

"If I could! if I could!" he exclaimed impetuously.

"You can, in a great degree, by attending to his wishes; becoming a son to his mother—a brother to his sister."

"No; no; they must hate me! and 'tis the very kindness of his words that is killing me. I hear him now, throwing all the blame upon himself."

"But they do not hate you; and the kindness of his words should be your consolation, since they prove him the fitter to die. It is selfish to wish to recall the good to life. There is still one way left to prove your love for him and for your mother, who is grieving sadly now. Give not way to despair; but pray in faith for forgiveness and hope, and, by returning to your former industrious habits, strive to maintain his mother and yours."

"Yes, James," said the widow, "they shall live with me here, and share all I have, if you will but listen to Miss Helen."

"But I cannot pray," replied the young man, in a sad but calmer tone, whilst a gleam of hope for one instant quenched the madness of despair; for he was softened and soothed by Helen's gentle but earnest entreaties, and her pitying tears seemed to have the power of cooling the burning of his brain. "I cannot pray, for he ever stands between me and heaven, looking as when I first struck him down; and I cannot work, for my strength is gone."

"But you will be able to do both in time. Think of the young man as he looked when he bade you protect his mother and sister; and go in and read to your mother. Who shall

tell the moment when you may be able to pray, or when those prayers may be heard?"

"I dare not read in that Book, for it is too holy for such as I am even to look upon; and I dare not meet his mother and sister."

"Then your mother or I will read to you; and his mother and sister shall seek you."

Helen's earnest kindness prevailed, and despair, though loath to quit its prey, at length gave place to hope. His heart was softened, and soothing tears fell from beneath his burning eye-lids as he listened to the gracious words of that blessed Book, as they fell from Helen's lips, read in a simple but fervent manner. The widow threw her arms round her son, and their tears mingled together—holy tears, sweeter, more blissful than the brightest smile.

Helen glided from the cottage with a noiseless step, for she would not check those tears by her presence; and entered another not far distant. In a few minutes the widow Feller, with her daughter, were in the cottage of the widow Watts, and by their kind assurances of forgiveness and regard had soothed the young man into what might almost be called happiness, compared with his former agony. What always gave Helen's endeavours to do good their greatest value, and increased their effect, was the total absence of all pretension. Every thing she did was done in simplicity and sincerity; and she ever won esteem and gratitude, if not success. In the present instance she succeeded to the utmost of her wishes, and had the pleasure of seeing James Watts in a short time resume his former active industry, and, by means of her encouragement and favour, provide for those he loved. Nor was his temper left unsubdued, though that was no light task, or speedily accomplished.

When Helen returned to Hurlestone, she seated herself in her own morning room, and took up her pencil to finish a drawing for her aunt, but her hand trembled, and the strokes were crooked and undecided. True there had been much of pleasure in her morning's visit—for the good must ever feel delight in doing good—but yet it had been a fearful warning, and fancy still made Dormer the hero of the tale. Whilst her thoughts would dwell on that painful subject, and the pencil still trembled between her fingers, a horseman darted past the window. A richer glow came to her cheek, for she thought it might be him; and more than ever anxious, nervous, and over-excited as she had been, to avoid what might prove a

distressing interview, she snatched up her bonnet to leave the house ; but before she could accomplish her purpose, a hurried step was heard in the hall, the door was flung hastily open, and her cousin stood before her. There was a crimson spot upon his cheek, a fire in his eye, and an impatience in every movement, that showed Helen at a glance he was in no amiable mood ; and even had it been otherwise, he was the very last person, Dormer himself excepted, whom she would have wished to see at that moment. But whatever were her wishes, she felt something was to occur that would require all the composure she could summon, and, accustomed from a child to self-control, it was astonishing to see how suddenly one possessed of such quick feelings could resume the command over her emotions, when need required. Her look and start of surprise, and perhaps displeasure, might have satisfied the keenest observer as to her total ignorance of what visitor she had to expect ; but there were feelings raging in Robert's heart which blinded his judgment, and, without the ceremony of a good morning, he asked sternly and abruptly, " Why were you seeking to avoid me ? "

" A polite salutation to a lady in her own boudoir, on my word, Robert ! You should study Chesterfield, or under one of the old regime. I was not seeking to avoid you ; for the very obvious reason, that unless I had been Nostradamus himself, I could scarcely have guessed of your coming. What can have induced you to desert the brilliant circle in town for the dull monotony of the country ? In a word, to what am I indebted for the honour of your visit ? "

" There was a time when you would have said pleasure," remarked he sternly.

" Why, my dear Robert, you cannot possibly pretend ignorance that ' the once upon a time ' of former days is now one of the has-beens ; *parler en femme*, gone out with short waists and long crops." She saw he understood the double meaning of her words, and then proceeded, still more playfully, albeit in no really playful mood :

" *Outre que cela*, you looked so very sublime, with your hat nearly pushed from your head by the more polite curls, shocked at its ill-breeding in keeping its station, that I thought honour the least grand name I could apply to you ; particularly as you came express, and, for the moment, brought alarm rather than pleasure."

" Ha ! you expected some other visitor ; and you look flurried, my cousin ! " he said searchingly.

"I certainly did not expect you; and that I hoped for no agreeable visitor was proved by my preparing to flee 'to the wildwood's lonely glade;' and distressed I have been, as you think."

Her frank answer and unembarrassed manner calmed him, and throwing his hat to the other end of the room, to the imminent peril of some of her pet curiosities, he took her hand and led her to a seat.

After looking over her drawing for a moment, he said; "You have drawn ill this morning, mine cousin!" and then, glancing over her sketch-book, he continued pettishly, "Marston! Marston! Marston! You seem never weary of drawing that. How many sketches have you taken of it lately?" turning full upon her.

"Not one, I have been otherwise engaged;" and she showed him a very beautiful sketch of Stanmore, glad to turn the conversation from Marston.

"Is this for me, Helen?" he asked, delighted at her having been thus employed.

"When you deserve it!" she replied, playfully taking it from him. "But you have not told me yet why you left London."

"Business," he muttered, and then relapsed into silence.

"What stories these lordly creatures tell!" thought Helen, making business an excuse for every thing. Then a thought glanced through her mind. She had once heard it hinted that her cousin gamed. Could a loss have occasioned his present gloom? She laid her hand kindly upon his arm, and looked up in his face.

"Dear Robert! has any thing happened to distress you? Only tell me. You know you can command my fortune."

"Any thing but your heart, Helen!" he replied with a flashing eye, rebuked rather than soothed by her kindness.

"Not so, Robert! I look upon you as a brother."

"A brother!" he repeated scornfully, then added: "will you let me command as a brother?"

"A brother only commands through love and reason."

"And if I commanded, you would say I heeded neither one or the other."

"Probably."

He was silent again, and then asked abruptly: "What distressed you this morning?"

"The agony of James Watts, at having taken away life in a fit of passion," she answered, looking steadily at him.

There was a something in her clear cold tone and steady look which awed him. The colour on his cheek went and came, whilst his lower lip quivered with the strong pressure of his teeth upon it. But the dark mood was upon him, and in a few minutes he answered scornfully: "A most distressing occurrence truly to the highly-born heiress of Hurlestone Park. One delver of dirt destroys another in a fit of passion, and she must needs weep his epitaph."

"For shame, Robert! life is as precious to the low as to the high; and the souls of both equal in the eyes of Heaven."

"Never trouble yourself to repeat the homily to me; but rather save it for your new favourite, Mr. Percy Dormer: if report speaks true, he is none of the gentlest, and it may save him from being tried for murder. Ha! have I touched you!" he continued, as shocked by his violence and the idea he had conjured up, he marked her shudder: and he grasped her arm and fixed his searching eyes upon her.

"You have touched and grieved me too, Mr. Euston; more deeply than I can well tell you;" she replied, feeling more than ever the necessity of firmness, and recovering herself instantly, as she withdrew her arm from his grasp, and met look with look. "I find I have no longer a cousin. Allow me to wish you good morning," and she rose to leave the room.

"You shall hear me first!" and he placed himself before her.

"Not contrary to my own inclination in this house, Mr. Euston. Impede my passage, and the servants shall force my freedom. I have already heard too much," and her hand touched the bell rope.

"The threat is vain; you would neither subject yourself or me to such a degradation."

"Trust not to that; you have inured me to degradation, and nothing can sink you lower than your own unmanly conduct."

There was not a symptom of wavering in her tone or manner, and he said less fiercely:

"Helen! Helen! how can you give up an old friend for the sake of a new acquaintance?"

"There is no question of the sort."

"There is—there is—but he shall never live to possess you."

"Pass from the door," said Helen indignantly, even whilst her blood ran cold at the threat. "I will bear no more."

He dared no longer disobey, but whilst he stepped aside, implored her by their childish love to forgive his violence, and listen to his words.

Though almost worn out by the constant recurrence of these scenes of outrage, she was softened, and lingered, seating herself at his entreaty; but near enough the door to depart at her pleasure. The subject that had been touched on, and that would, most probably, be touched on again, was to her the most painful that could well have been chosen; yet with all her outward firmness she felt the danger of driving her cousin to extremity, and sat in dread of his next sentence, whilst his silence equally proclaimed the difficulty of wording that sentence to please himself. Thus situated, it was a relief to both when Mrs. Hargrave came in and welcomed Robert, to Helen's fancy not quite as an unexpected guest.

The sound of carriage wheels induced him to take his leave, as he felt no inclination to encounter strangers. Mrs. Hargrave asked him to stay dinner, but, as Helen did not second the invitation, he departed the more readily, as he heard she had an engagement with Miss Jones at two, and talked of bringing her back with her.

"Do not let us part in anger, Helen, though I own I deserve it;" he said, as she drew back from his extended hand. "If you knew what I suffer when I offend you, you would pity me."

Touched by his avowal of error, she gave him her hand: and as he pressed it, he said, "I would I could be all you wish."

The belief that Mr. Dormer had left the country, notwithstanding her morning's agitation at a strange sound; the knowledge that once to show fear or weakness would deprive her of all controul over her cousin's fierce temper, had enabled her to act as she had done; but all the events of the day had been harassing and alarming, and anxious to be alone, she did not ask Miss Jones to return with her, no longer requiring her presence to prevent a *tête-à-tête* with her cousin.

Dismissing her pony carriage, and accompanied by her favourite Bran, she turned into one of the beautiful walks which wound through the stately woods: "where the home of her forefathers stood." Absorbed in melancholy thoughts, she pursued her way mechanically, till a loud bark from Bran, the snorting of a horse, and the rustling among the branches,

made her start; and, almost before she could look round, Mr. Dormer had sprung from his horse, taken her hand, and was pouring forth in warm and eloquent terms his delight at their meeting.

The surprise, nay almost terror, occasioned by his sudden appearance; the fear of what might occur should he by any chance encounter her cousin in his present temper; the remembrance of Dormer's haughty conduct at their last meeting; and above all the scenes of the morning, were too much for a frame ever delicate. She turned pale, trembled, and must have fallen had not his arm supported her. The anxious tenderness of his expressions whilst so doing, revealed the state of his feelings, and convinced her of the greater necessity for the exertion. She would have given much for tears, that woman's panacea; but struggling against them, with a strong effort she recovered herself sufficiently to stand without his support, and declining even the assistance of his arm, she leant for a moment against a tree. Her next task was to laugh at her own folly and nervousness, and to attribute the temporary faintness to having been harassed in the morning, and to the surprise and alarm occasioned by his sudden appearance.

The task was executed with no inconsiderable degree of self possession, and without, as she thought, a single flattering expression; and yet, to her mortification and confusion, she saw plainly from her companion's manner, that his love or vanity led him to interpret her conduct according to his own wishes.

She would have wished him good morning at once, but the glimpse of a horseman through some distant trees, made her fear that by so doing she might risk the chance of his meeting with Robert; besides, his manner made it doubtful whether a dismissal, however cold, would not rather accelerate than retard a more open demonstration of regard. Her only plan, therefore, was to reach the house as soon as possible; to shelter herself in Mrs. Hargrave's presence; and to maintain a cool and indifferent demeanour during her walk thither. But she found more difficulty than she had imagined in maintaining this cool indifference.

Mr. Dormer surpassed himself in brilliancy and fascination, and none, who had seen him then for the first time, would have guessed at the fiery passions hid under such a dazzling exterior. Her coldness he mistook for maiden bashfulness, and in the strength of his own wishes read her conduct as it

pleased him best. His usual hauteur was tempered by tenderness ; and Helen felt, as she listened, she had met none like him before, and she might meet none like him hereafter. He found the walk so delightful, he would have lured her to linger and gaze on the beauties around, but she pleaded fatigue as an excuse ; and her pale cheek, only occasionally lit up with a gleam of brightness from the force of his eloquence, proved the truth of her plea. Still she declined his proffered arm, and still he read the refusal as he wished.

"If you knew how anxiously I have sought to meet you, day after day, riding through every part of your domain, where there were paths and where there were none, surely you would not seek to make this interview so short !" he said, as her wish to reach the house became more apparent.

It was not in mortal woman to feel other than gratified by such seeking, from such a man ; but she answered only politely, without slackening her pace :

"I am sorry you should have had so much trouble ; I have been from home for the last few days." But she did not add, what was the truth, "for the purpose of avoiding him."

"Trouble ! What a word to use ! One would think we had met but to-day, whereas my vanity has been whispering the hope, that sympathy can make one hour of real living life worth years of merely dull existence."

The look, the words, the tone, might have made it difficult for Helen to answer as she could have wished ; but the stream to which Alford had given the name of Lethe, bursting on her view, with all its memories and associations, gave her an advantage of which she did not fail to avail herself.

"By your own desire, I believe, to-day is to be considered the second of our acquaintance ?" and she glanced towards the stream.

He had forgotten every thing that had passed at that interview, till this look recalled it to his mind. Violent as was his temper, yet never retaining enmity against any one himself, and trusting to others having the same forgetfulness, he rarely troubled himself about apologies, and his proud spirit had seldom the humiliation, as he thought it, of owning itself in the wrong. But other feelings governed him now, and in answer to her look he pleaded earnestly, with a heightened colour, though rather a lordly manner, that she would pardon and forget all in his words or actions that had at any time been displeasing to her.

"That I erred, greatly erred, I own ; but there are times

when a word can urge to frenzy—there are doubts sharper and deadlier than poisoned swords.”

He was still pleading his cause, with impassioned eloquence, and she listening in embarrassed silence, when the whine of a beggar caused an interruption, to the annoyance of one party and the relief of the other.

“Please to bestow your charity on a poor distressed weaver.”

“Begone!” cried Dormer in no gentle tone, enraged at the interruption, and then, never dreaming of disobedience to a mandate of his, turned again to address Helen.

“Please to bestow your charity on a poor distressed weaver, with a wife and six hungry children;” again whined the ill-looking man, close to Helen’s ear.

“Begone, I tell you!” repeated Dormer, with a look and tone so terrible that Helen trembled; but she had no silver, and feared to irritate him still more by stopping. But the man was not to be repulsed, and his disagreeable whine still mingled with Dormer’s manly voice, as he continued to address his fair companion. Dormer had been seeking this interview with a pertinacity, a stooping to woman, he had never shown before; and now that he had gained it, augured all he desired from her manner. Was this impudent interruption to be borne, when perhaps the colour of his future life hung on that moment? All the feelings that the disappointments of his days of fruitless seeking had awakened, rushed at once to his mind, and in the moment of his passion that man seemed the cause of all. The whine became louder and more importunate—Dormer could bear no more—he stepped back, and before any one could guess his intention, the beggar was lying on the ground, and the blood flowing down his face. Helen turned deadly pale, but repulsing Dormer’s offer to support and lead her away, with a look of reproach, which well nigh maddened him, she knelt beside the beggar, and wiped the blood from his face. But slightly stunned by the blow, he recovered almost instantly, and our heroine had the relief of finding his injury was not worth mentioning. Her kindness prevented all expression of violence towards her; but as he rose, the look he threw on Dormer told of hate to be increased rather than diminished by time. That gentleman’s answering look was not less fierce, with this difference—in his there was only the rage of the present; in the beggar’s the rage of the past, the present, and the future were mingled, and only made his silence the more frightful.

No sooner had his victim fallen than Dormer repented of the act, and would have more than repaired the injury, as far as money and kind words could do it; and indeed he had assisted her to recover him; but the look of reproach from her, and the vindictive glare of the beggar, roused all his pride, and he stood with haughty mien prepared to defend the deed if necessary. To Helen's inquiry if he could walk now, the man simply answered "Yes;" and, anxious to end the scene, she expressed her sorrow for what had passed, and taking three sovereigns from her purse gave them to him; telling him to leave the neighbourhood directly, and adding, "for your own sake you had better be silent." Dormer would have remonstrated, but she was resolute, saying, after her alarm she claimed the right to act as she pleased. The man took the money with thanks, and either grateful for her kindness, or to gain more at some future time, promised secrecy; then, turning to Dormer with another look of hate, he clenched his fist, muttered, "We shall meet again," and then took a path which led from the park.

Alarmed and distressed at the late scene, it was with the greatest difficulty Helen could prevent herself from fainting; and it was with slow and languid steps that, drawing down her veil, she proceeded towards the house in silence. Her companion walked by her side as silent as herself. The very consciousness of error, a consciousness he could not smother, made her disapprobation the more galling; whilst his overweening pride whispered, her love should have taught her to judge more mildly. It was not till they had nearly reached the house that he spoke.

"Allow me to repay the money you gave that man," presenting it as he spoke.

"By no means," she answered hastily, "it was given to please myself, not you."

"Pardon me, it was to repair what I had done."

"Give it to some charity then, as you are so scrupulous."

"I understand you," he said, in a half proud, half melancholy tone; "you detest me too much to receive even a debt from my hands; But you have ever judged me harshly."

"I do not judge you harshly, Mr. Dormer, but I cannot do other than regret that you allow such mastery to your passions."

"Surely, if you regret it you would wish to change it. Do but listen to my prayers! It rests with you to make me what you will;" and he looked upon her with those superb dark eyes, the only fitting speakers of his bright hopes.

She withdrew the hand he would have taken, avoided his look, and answered with as little tremour as could be expected.

"That cannot be, Mr. Dormer. I must ever feel an interest in your welfare, but the amendment which is founded only on the approval of a being erring like yourself, has too low and unstable a basement to be lasting or effectual."

They reached the house as she finished speaking, and, most desirous to put an end to the interview, she would have wished him good morning without asking him to enter; but, most unfortunately, the rain which had been threatening all day at this moment began to fall, and a servant appearing to take his horse, common humanity, as well as common politeness, obliged her to invite him in, though, had she been blessed, or cursed, whichever it may be, with second sight, it is doubtful if she would have offered him shelter, though it had rained cats, dogs, and pitch-forks. But Helen was a southern maiden, and every event of this day had proved that her ken extended not beyond the present.

It had been a day of troubles and *contretemps*; but as she ushered her guest towards the drawing-room, fully anticipating the presence of Mrs. Hargrave, she flattered herself he would soon depart, and leave her time to think and to rejoice at having prevented a meeting between him and her cousin. So much for Helen's schemes and Helen's foresight. Had she pressed her cousin to dine, she would have known better how to avoid him; had she procured the company of Miss Jones, Dormer might not have joined her; had she proceeded to the library instead of the drawing-room, she would have found her aunt: but she had done none of these things, and her dismay can be better imagined than described, when on throwing open the door to admit her visitor, she found herself fronting the very person she would at that moment have least wished to front—Robert Euston. This was a *contretemps* she had not anticipated. That very thing should come to pass which she had laboured so hard to prevent! What then? Heiresses must meet with troubles as well as other people. Had she seen a ghost, if such things are, she could not have been more alarmed; and would have felt little scruple in consigning her cousin for a while to a companionship with all the evil spirits laid in the Red Sea since time began, "With candle, with book, and with bell." She had well nigh given up the matter in despair, for Dormer had entered the room, and to show him elsewhere was impossible, when the curl of her cousin's lip, as he marked her terror, and the look of defiance

that passed between the gentlemen, showed her the danger of allowing two such fiery spirits to come in collision, and roused all her powers to prevent further mischief. Availing herself of the fashionable dogma of non-introduction, which allows you the happy chance of ridiculing your next neighbour unwittingly, for the gentlemen as yet knew each other only by sight, she motioned Dormer to a chair as much out of Robert's view as possible, and seated herself between them. Checking Robert with a look which brought the colour to his cheek, she commenced the difficult task of balancing her politeness and keeping the peace. Difficult as was the task, her success was for some time perfect. Neither gentleman spoke to the other, but both conversed with her. Dormer willingly, nay anxiously, as a means to banish the memory of the past; her cousin, as a matter of policy, to prevent any favour to his rival. Her success was so far beyond her hopes that, the weather having cleared, she was again entertaining the idea of a speedy release from her unpleasant situation, when her cousin, thinking she had bestowed too much attention for the last few minutes on her other visitor, availed himself of the first pause to say, with an air of mingled impertinence and non-chalance, "Suppose, Helen, you finish that 'Tale of Passion' you began, and the accompanying homily for our edification."

Had Robert studied a thousand years he could not have hit on a subject more annoying to his rival, who imagined him, from these words, aware of the scene with the beggar; but his flashing eye at the insult was fortunately hidden from the insulter. This certainly must be the crowning mischance of the day. Nothing now could prevent a collision between them, and she turned pale at the thought.

"Come, Helen," continued her-cousin, amazed at the effect of his own words, and heedless of her distress so he could but annoy Dormer, "pray let us have the story. Something about one man knocking down another in a passion, was it not?"

Dormer rose from his seat in mighty wrath, threw a reproachful glance at Helen, forgetting in his rage the utter impossibility of her having told her cousin one word concerning the beggar, and then strode towards Robert. The very imminence of the danger again roused Helen to exertion. She stepped instantly between the wrathful spirits, answered Dormer's look with one that, whilst it declared her innocence, told also her wish to save him from further pain, asked his

opinion of a drawing on a table near, and then answered her cousin with a coldness that showed her displeasure.

"No, Robert! I am not going to weary Mr. Dormer with the village tale I began to you this morning; it could only be interesting to those knowing the parties."

"I beg pardon, I thought the moral might be edifying and amending to all."

"I have strong doubts if any thing will ever amend you," she answered, still more coldly; 'then seizing, with woman's wit, on any thing to change the conversation, she summoned them both to look at a new horse which just then passed the windows; and the whole party in consequence adjourned to the lawn, Helen still keeping between them. Some fresh cause for dispute might have arisen whilst discussing the merits of the animal, had not the sound of the dinner-bell proved to Dormer the necessity of his instant departure, if he at all valued Lord Marston's good humour.

"Think not of me too harshly," he said, as he bade Helen adieu, "and forgive me if I doubted your kindness for a moment; to-morrow we meet again."

A bow of such studied politeness passed between the gentlemen, as told the humour of their minds.

"Have I your permission to dine at Hurlestone, Miss St. Maur?" asked her cousin ironically.

Helen durst not say no, and would not say yes; so steered a middle course.

"You are Mrs. Hargrave's guest, I conclude."

He read her thoughts, and to terrify her into more cordiality flung away rudely, saying, "Then I ride back with Mr. Dormer. I want excitement."

"Do so, and these doors are closed against your return."

He looked fiercely at her, but her eye sank not beneath the gaze, and he dared not fulfil his threat.

"Allow me to conduct you back to the drawing-room."

"Excuse me, I must dress for dinner;" and declining his proffered arm, she passed on to her dressing-room.

CHAPTER X.

The hero moved on, like a cloud before a ridge of heaven's fire ; when it pours on the sky of night, mariners foresee a storm.

OSGLAN.

As breeze and tide to yonder skiff,
Thou'rt adverse to the suit I bring,
And cold as is yon wintry cliff,
Where sea-birds close their weary wing.

WHEN Helen descended from her room, which was not till dinner had been announced, she pleaded a severe headache in excuse for her ill looks and little appetite, and scarcely spoke during the repast. Robert was either sulky, or something very like it, and the dinner neither afforded a display of

“The feast of reason or the flow of soul.”

Vain was his hope of meeting his cousin alone in the drawing-room ; she did not appear till late in the evening, and he would not have seen her then, had she not feared to irritate him to some desperate act. When she did appear her looks were a rebuke to his violence.

Mrs. Hargrave was too much his friend to be in the way, and soon left the cousins together. Robert would have preferred an opportunity of observing what effect his words might produce on Helen ; but she baffled his purpose by remaining in the recess of the window, and sending the lights to the other end of the room, on the plea of her head-ache.

He felt he had said too much in the morning not to say more ; and his ill humour had been increased by seeing her return with Dormer. He must either apologize for the past, and promise for the future, which he had done a hundred times before, and broken the promise as soon as made, or he must carry the matter with as high a hand as he dared, and make himself appear to be the party aggrieved. It need scarcely be said he chose the latter course. In crossing the apartment to take a seat beside his cousin, so heedless had his ill-humour made him, and so little light was there in that part of the room, that he first fell over a footstool, and then nearly threw down a flower-table, splashing the water around in no measured quantity. One or two hasty exclamations, which did him no credit, escaped him ; but Helen took no further notice of his conduct or mischances, than drawing a

table in such a manner as to prevent his taking a seat beside, or exactly before her ; yet at the same time allowing herself free passage from her den, should she wish to retreat. Having repaired the damage as well as his impatience would permit, he took the nearest seat to hers which her manœuvre had left him, and as a polite preliminary asked if her head were better. No, rather worse ; was the answer, and then there was another silence, whilst the gentleman felt all the difficulty of making a commencement. At length he began again, in as careless a tone as he could assume.

"Mrs. Jones says, that your gallant preserver, the Knight of the Bridge, and Mr. Percy Dormer are one and the same." He paused, but receiving no answer continued more vehemently. "She also says that he is your accepted lover, and that the nuptials are to be celebrated immediately." Still no answer. "What say you to this ?" he inquired in a rage.

"That Mrs. Jones will say any thing," replied his cousin with the most provoking indifference ; "and that I have heard you declare you would not crush a slug on her word."

"This pretended indifference, and repetition of my words, will not succeed. I have asked a plain question, and will have a plain answer."

"Stop ! you must first allow me to ask questions and have answers. Was the purpose of your second visit to Hurlestone only to repeat the idle tale of an idle gossip ?"

"You shall not thus evade my question Helen. I will be answered !"

"Shall and will, Mr. Euston, are words which can no longer be used from you to me."

His passion rose higher and higher as he felt himself in the wrong, and found her disinclination to yield to his vehemence. Stamping his foot with violence, he insisted in a furious tone on an answer.

"On what grounds, Mr. Euston. As a reward for your very disinterested concern for my welfare ; or as a recompense for your very gentlemanly conduct of this morning ; or your equally gentlemanly behaviour of this evening ; or for your thousand promises of gentleness, so freely given, and so rarely kept."

Galled by these truths, his fury almost choked his utterance, as he exclaimed ; "I claim an answer as your nearest relative ; I claim it by the love I have so long borne you : and I warn you to refuse it at your peril. You shall not tamper with me, as in the morning ; there is no bell near you now."

Her only answer was to hold up before him an antique bell, that had stood on the table before her.

He paced the room with hasty strides, and then spoke again.

"I ask but one question; refuse to answer if you dare. Are you engaged to Mr. Dormer?"

There was a fierce sternness in his tone which made Helen tremble, though the darkness prevented his perceiving it, and she feared to refuse him.

"Were it not for old remembrances, I would not parley with you a moment longer; but for your mother's sake, and because these reports are offensive to maiden delicacy, I will say I am not engaged to Mr. Dormer."

"Say rather for the sake of your minion's safety you answered my question; and well was it that you did so. If I find there has been falsehood, look to it! His blood rest on your head!"

Indignant at this insult, she rose, wheeled the table from before her, passed out close to Robert, looking at him as she did so; stood out in the full light, and bade him leave her presence, and never enter it again without her express permission. As she stood, with one arm slightly extended, the bright curls thrown back from her high forehead, dazzling with its whiteness; her delicate form raised to its full height, and the fire of woman's offended dignity flashing in her eye, and flushing on her cheek; she looked so bright, so beautiful, that anger faded before admiration, and he stood gazing on her in silence. Then came shame at his late outrage, with the conviction of her truth—for none could look upon her and doubt; and fearful lest further violence should induce her to enforce obedience to her command, he hastened to avow his error, and once more implore her pardon. She listened to him in silence, only shaking her head mournfully at his promise, knowing, from painful experience, how little those promises could be relied on. He saw her incredulity, and was piqued; forgetting what good warranty for such doubt his conduct had ever afforded.

"You distrust me," he said; "put me to the test."

"I will. Return to town to-morrow morning, from whence no real business summoned you."

All his repentance vanished in a moment, his promises were forgotten, and his former fury animated him as he replied.

"I am no dolt, Helen, to be fooled even by your wiles,

beautiful as you are. You would enjoy a *tête-à-tête* amid the romantic wilds of Feldon Park ; but I too shall be there ; and look you how you smile on Dormer."

"Mr. Euston," said Helen, the more indignantly as she had long since decided on declining the morrow's party, "my woman's delicacy is not yet so deadened by your constant suspicions, as to allow me to submit longer to such language. Since my sex, my want of protectors, the propriety of my conduct, the affection of our childhood, and the high honour of a gentleman, cannot save me from insult, it is fitting our acquaintance should end now, and for ever. Pass from before me, Sir,—I would be alone."

"One word, Helen," as he caught her gown. "Promise never to wed with Dormer, and I will be gentle as a lamb."

He saw her colour come and go as he looked upon her, and his very breathing was suspended to hear her answer. She was silent for some moments, and then she said : "That is a promise you have no right to ask, and I no right to give : it would be indelicate and ungenerous to Mr. Dormer. Therefore——"

He interrupted her vehemence. "I warn you, Helen—the rage of the tornado, the earthquake, and the volcano, are nothing to Dormer's passions."

She would have yielded all her fortune for the power of denial, but she dared not even hint a falsehood.

"Your conduct is a sufficient warning against violence, without your words ; and if habit could reconcile, I should smile at the tempest's fury. That Mr. Dormer's name may no more be coupled with mine, I again repeat no engagement does, or is likely to exist between us. And now, since you cannot, or will not, control your temper, and I am ill able to bear these constant scenes of violence, it is better we should meet no more, except in general society. If you have any honour or delicacy left, you will do nothing to make me the gossip of the county ; and beware how you force me to seek a protector from your insults."

She disengaged herself from his grasp, and bidding him farewell in a kind but decided tone, passed from the room with a cheek that was very, very pale, but a firm and lofty step.

He heard her words, and saw her departing, but was deprived of all power to detain her. Could it be real ? Would she keep her resolve ? If so, life would be to him a blank. True she had borne more than any other would have done,

and he had had warning upon warning. But could she give up the playfellow of her childhood? her nearest relative? He could not believe it—he would not believe it. If so, it must be Dormer's doing, and he hated him more than ever. Then he thought on her pale cheek as she left the room, and he trembled for her health. He knew it was a firm and noble spirit enshrined in a fragile form, whose beauty was at times so delicate, as to make the gazer fear as he admired. It would not be the first time that his rage had bowed down this delicate flower. The thought was agony. Should he yield her to Dormer? Never! Never! and he gnashed his teeth as he said it. She might not love him? His hopes revived at the doubt. She had denied the existence of any engagement for the present; but then she had refused to promise for the future. It might be delicacy—it might be a warmer feeling. Doubt, fear, love, anger, and sorrow, raged within him by turns, and passion herself might have taken a warning from the torments he endured. At length one idea became paramount, the fear lest she would see him no more; one wish triumphed over every other, that of winning her pardon; and, at the moment, he thought her forgiveness worth any sacrifice. But how was this to be accomplished? He was still pacing up and down the room, with wild and irregular steps, when Mrs. Hargrave entered. She could not but be shocked at his strange looks and manner, and eagerly demanded the cause. A few incoherent words explained to that lady all he cared she should know; and laying the blame on Helen, as being the one most likely to thwart her favourite scheme, she readily offered to play ambassadress on the occasion. Fearful that Helen might return a note unread, and equally fearful to force himself into her presence, or to depart without an effort to soften her displeasure, he caught eagerly at the offer, and the lady went on her embassy with the most humble and earnest entreaties for an interview, however short; accompanied by every possible pledge of calmness and non detention. He stood at the open door, and counted her steps, till she entered his cousin's dressing room, and then he leant in breathless expectation; but minute after minute rolled away, and still his messenger returned not. The *peine forte et dure*, now happily abolished, had scarcely more of torture. He fancied he heard a bustle in the distant apartment; he mounted the stairs, but could distinguish nothing, and he descended them again. One moment he augured good, then evil, from the delay. It has been said the longest half hour

will have an end, and for this once at least there was wisdom in the saying. At length his messenger returned, but her looks plainly told with no accordance to his wishes.

He asked her by gestures rather than by words, the speed-
ing of her errand. It was certainly any thing but consolatory. She had found Helen prepared for rest, to avoid all importunities, and looking too ill for even her aunt to propose an interview that night; and Helen had declined giving a promise for the future. "She says she is not angry; but not having health to endure your violence, it is better you should meet but seldom, and never alone. I scolded, told her the agony you were suffering, and at last hinted your mind was in such a state, that I could not answer for your not committing some rash act."

"What said she to this?" inquired Robert eagerly, willing to avail himself of the threat, should it prove likely to serve his cause.

"At first I thought she looked angry; and she said you would leave her no refuge but the grave: then she asked abruptly if you had sent that message; and when I allowed her to think you had, she looked paler than before, murmured 'ungenerous,' and some other words I could not hear, and then she grew so faint I was frightened, and called her maid."

"Fool!" burst from Robert's lip's; for, like most others, he was inclined to judge of actions from their effects; and now vehemently disclaimed all intention of threatening violence. Shocked at having been the cause of her illness, he snatched up a pen, and scrawling a few lines, begged Mrs. Hargrave would give them to his cousin; and that lady, notwithstanding his discourteous demeanour, immediately complied with his wishes. Despite his shame and sorrow, he was selfish and ungenerous enough to avail himself of the power of a vague threat to force from her the promise of an interview; and Helen was but little relieved when she read the following note:—

"DEAREST HELEN,—You are ill, and I am the cause! I cannot bear to give you pain—I cannot endure your anger—I will not live banished from your presence. Forgive me for the early past; for my mother's sake, if you will not for my own. At least allow me one interview to plead my cause before you condemn me to worse than death. Promise this, and you need fear no violence. Say but yes; I ask no more.

Yours, and yours truly,

ROBERT EUSTON."

There was nothing in this note on which to ground a hope for the future; and she saw at once that what had been would be again; but too ill to contend, and too fearful to proceed to extremities, she returned him these few lines:

"For his mother's sake, Miss St. Maur will see Mr. Euston once more, at twelve, on the day after to-morrow; should nothing have occurred in the mean time to induce her to change her intention."

He bit his lip as he read this cold assent to his wishes; for no sooner was the interview granted than, with his usual inconsistency, he began to quarrel with the manner in which it had been accorded, though he returned a kind and grateful message.

It is a fanciful yet beautiful idea, that loving souls came into the world by pairs; though, if so, there must have been strange wandering from the right road, and some can never have found their fellows till after death.

It is as fanciful, though certainly a far less beautiful idea, that misliking souls have also their fellows in this scene of toil and strife; and that sometime or other during life, all will meet with some one being of whom they will fancy or feel, that as fades or brightens that other's lot, so, in contrast, fades or brightens their own; and to this fancy or feeling, whichever it may be, clings a species of hatred, varying in colour and depth, according to each varying character.

If this theory be true—for being no particular friends to theories, we do not intend to defend its wisdom—it may account for the feeling partaking of hate, which arose, as if by instinct, in the bosoms of Percy Dormer and Robert Euston, the instant they encountered each other in the drawing-room at Hurlestone. If not true, still the feeling was there; fierce, deep, and lasting. They recognized each other as deadly rivals, and from that moment it wanted but a breath to fan the flame of hate into a destroying fire.

Some people, who pride themselves in accounting reasonably for every thing, might say, that Dormer having heard of the influence supposed to be exercised over Helen by her cousin, and reading his passion for her at a glance, laid the blame of her late coldness on the persuasions of another, rather than on his own violence; whilst Robert, aware of Dormer's superiority, from general report, and occasional meetings, and fearing the effects of his own powers, and

Alford's incessant praises, saw in him a rival more to be dreaded and consequently more to be hated than any other ; and that, knowing he was expected in the neighbourhood, he had known him at once from description as Miss Jones's hero, which would account for his violence concerning one all thought a stranger.

We have already stated our dislike to "*les gens qui ont toujours raison*," so cannot be expected to give a cordial assent to this reasonable statement. Who knows but a homely adage may account for this mortal dislike, more clearly than commentaries, as numerous as those on the Koran : "Two of a trade can never agree?" thus

"When pride meets pride, then comes the tug of war."

It was jealousy which made Robert hurry from town, on learning Dormer was really at Marston, and bending his pride to Helen's beauty ; intelligence conveyed by Mrs. Hargrave, amid some odd commissions. Helen's illness had rather softened him, but long before he had reached his own house, he had muttered to himself, "Not till the day after to-morrow—she had better have seen me to-night, or early in the morning. And she would give no promise. Well, let it be : I shall cross her path to-morrow, and let her frown upon me if she dare."

And what were Helen's thoughts through that long, long night?—for she never closed her eyes till after day had dawned. What could they be ? The poorest cottager, the meanest beggar unstained by crime, would scarcely have done well to change that night with the noble, the beautiful, the rich, the admired heiress of Hurlestone Park : she whose presence brought joy to all ; whose goodness and whose loveliness won their way to every heart. She had shuddered at her cousin's violence before ; but what was any former fear to the dread of a quarrel between him and Dormer ? The passions of the boy would most probably have yielded to judicious control, and left only courage and activity ; but such control had been wanting, and poor Helen must pay the penalty of another's fault.

The day of the pic-nic was come ; as bright and as beautiful as though it had never been chosen for a party of pleasure, or as though there were no such things in the world as cloudy skies or disappointed young hearts. Helen rejoiced in the beauty of the day for the sake of others ; but it could make no change in her own resolve. She doubted not that Robert would join the party, and her presence might again

arouse him to fury. Dormer would be there—and they might meet no more. What then? It was better for both that it should be so. She sat down before her writing-desk, and in a short time her messenger was speeding to Marston with the following notes.

To Lady Catherine Alford.

MY DEAR CATHERINE,—A violent head-ache will prevent my profiting by your example in the art of playing popular at Feldon. Will you make all fitting excuses for me to Mrs. Carleton, and accept the same from

Your's sincerely,

HELEN ST. MAUR.

When this note was written, she paused some time ere beginning the second; but she had been haunted all night with images of the dead and dying; the scenes of the day had been acted over again in her dreams with frightful exaggerations and maddening horrors; and she feared to allow a false delicacy to prevent her guarding against the threatened danger. Alford had but lately renewed his offers of kind and brotherly service, and she knew, from experience, that where she was concerned she had nothing to dread from the absence of delicacy or discretion. He had been almost as much a brother to her as her cousin, and ever considerate and consistent. She dared not hesitate; and with a hasty pen wrote as follows:

To Viscount Alford.

When must my gardener be prepared for the beautiful flowers you promised? Let me know by the bearer. A head-ache prevents my joining the gay party, so you are released from the office of *Preux Chevalier*, and can work mischief at your pleasure. I believe my cousin will be at Feldon; and perhaps in no amiable mood. Could you not keep him and your friend apart? They met here yesterday, and their parting bows were any thing rather than neighbourly: but I know I may rely on your prudence. Were I to say more, a child would understand me.

Your's sincerely,

HELEN ST. MAUR.

P. S. I like gossip almost as well as Mrs. Jones, so you must indulge me with an early account of this rural refec-tion.

To guard against all mistakes, she gave the orders herself. "Take this to Lady Catherine Alford: it requires no answer. Be sure and deliver this other note only into Lord Alford's own hands, as I must have an answer to it about some flowers; and be back as soon as you can."

Mrs. Hargrave was in ill-humour at our heroine's not fulfilling the engagement, as she too was convinced that Robert would be there; and poor Helen's head-ache was indeed no vain excuse. Sometimes she wished she had, by appointing that day for seeing her cousin, prevented the possibility of his meeting Dormer at Feldon; but, besides that she really required some hours of quiet to fit her for the interview, her own wishes led her to desire his absence on this day particularly, though she could have given no good reason for such a fancy.

Ill and restless, she feared she had said too much or too little to Alford; and, as the return of her messenger was delayed minute after minute, her fancy conjured up the wildest images of terror. At length she beheld him coming at full speed, and had it been a lover hastening to meet the lady of his affections, she could scarcely have watched his approach with more anxiety. The contents of the note relieved her fears, and she questioned her messenger as to his delay. It appeared that Alford and Dormer had left Marston early in the morning on some electioneering business; but, mindful of her orders, the man had ridden nearly to Feldon, whither they were to proceed, to deliver the note.

"You did perfectly right," she said. "His lordship tells me the flowers will be here this evening, or to-morrow morning; therefore desire the gardener to join me directly in my flower garden, that I may give him orders to have every thing in readiness."

Alford's note contained only a few hurried lines in pencil, promising the flowers, and telling her he understood her bidding, and that she might calm her fears, for that he would be her second self in tact and discretion. The note being written in Italian, lest, having no seal, some prying eye should read its contents, seemed a good earnest of the writer's promised prudence; and Helen felt calmed and re-assured. After arranging every thing with the gardener she returned to the drawing-room; and, to banish a feeling of restlessness and vague presentiment which tormented her, condemned herself to the writing a letter on business for the post. Whilst engaged in this absorbing, if not interesting, task, she was startled

by a thundering knock at the hall door, which spoke the impatience of the visitor, and the impossibility of denying herself. All she could do, concluding it must be Robert, was to pass into an adjoining room, and thus secure the option of appearing or not, as might best please her. A servant entering immediately after, announced that Mr. Dormer was waiting her presence in the drawing-room. She could give no good reason for declining the interview, and she entered the room, and returned her visitor's salutation with her usual elegance and self-possession.

He asked kindly, even tenderly, after her head-ache; and the flush which his unexpected visit had brought into her before pale cheek, induced him to add, he hoped it was not very severe.

"It is much better now," she replied. "The air has removed much of the pain; but I am certainly not very brilliant, though I have a letter on business to write for to-day's post."

If she intended this as a hint for a speedy departure, he either did not or would not understand it; and there was an impatience, an earnestness in his manner, that seemed to intimate this was not to be looked on as a common morning visit.

"You should have tried the air at Feldon; the regrets at your absence were innumerable. I only regretted not, since I hoped to see you here undisturbed by the folly of the silly and the vain. Yet I feared you might be too unwell to see me, for your cousin announced he had left you very ill last night; and on his persuasions the party lay the blame of your absence."

He fixed his eyes on her as he spoke, and she felt he wished and expected to receive more information than his words demanded. Anxious to destroy all idea of rivalry between them, as well as to contradict the opinion she was aware was entertained by many, that her cousin exercised control over her actions, she answered as fully as her questioner desired.

"I certainly was very unwell last night, but my declining the picnic was entirely my own act and deed; and since I never spoke to Mr. Euston on the subject, he can have learnt only from others my defection and its cause."

"Then he has not seen you this morning, and does not influence your actions?"

"He certainly has neither seen nor heard from me this morning, and his opinions rarely colour my conduct."

"And yet, if the world speak truth, you regard him highly." There was a slight hesitation as he pronounced the word

‘regard,’ which Helen perceiving, she herself used it, and laid an emphasis on it.

“I do regard my cousin highly; but the world I believe exaggerates the strength, or mistakes the nature of the feeling. And I rather suspect, were I so inclined, that I might assume the prerogative of majesty, and consider myself as one who can do no wrong; but I am not so inclined, and, in justice, the praise or blame due to every act must rest on myself alone.”

The slight shade of doubt or distrust, which had clouded Dormer’s brow on his entrance, passed away like a summer cloud, and his ardent spirit shone forth in all its native brightness. Every thing that had pained him in her since their acquaintance—his own violence—all of doubt and fear that he could ever know—vanished from his mind. His usually calm, dignified, almost cold demeanour, changed with his feelings, and Helen began to suspect in avoiding one danger she had unwarily subjected herself to another. Her self-possession received more than one shock; and doubt, expectation, sorrow, confusion, and a tinge of gratified pride, began to disturb her equanimity. She asked for a frank, and more than hinted her letter should go that day. He wrote the frank, and declared his intention of waiting till her letter was finished; adding she might find him troublesome, but, as he must leave the neighbourhood the next day, he had not self-denial enough to resign the pleasure of her society so soon.

She could but bow and finish her letter, though she sat in dread lest Robert should hear of this visit, and turn the duet into a trio. She concluded her letter as soon as possible, for she felt that though he still retained the book she had recommended, his eyes were fixed on her; and, despite all her endeavours, she was aware the colour varied on her cheek, and that her fingers refused to guide the pen with their usual firmness. The letter was finished, folded, directed; the bell was rung for the servant; the taper was ordered to be lighted, brought back; and the letter was deliberately sealed, and given for the post. She inquired if Mrs. Hargrave had been told of Mr. Dormer’s visit, as she had desired, and was answered that she could not be found. She ordered refreshments, but they were positively declined. There could be no further pretence for detaining the servant, and he left the room. He rose, and approached her; she rose too, shewed some drawings, and moved about to prevent any thing like uninterrupted conversation; but she had the mortification of

knowing, almost without looking, that those dark eyes followed her every movement, and that a smile, as she thought, of triumph, curved his lip. All this was strange after her cold reproof of yesterday : but she did not remember he was one of your Veni-Vidi-Vici men, who never admit the possibility of failure, and fancy victory must attend their banners if they stop to unfurl them ; nor did she know he had overheard more than one of the pic-nic party assert that the victory was already his. There was a slight noise in the adjoining conservatory ; it might be her aunt, and she insisted on showing him a rare exotic. He followed her with the same admiring gaze, the same confusing and triumphant smile. Helen's hopes were vain—it was only the gardener. She would have detained him, under pretence of giving the names of the flowers, but he was gone before she could effect her purpose.

More than two hours had elapsed since they had entered the conservatory, and still the lady was sitting there alone, and sad. There were traces of tears easily to be seen ; her hands hung listless by her side, and her head rested against a pillar. The petals of more than one rare plant were strewed around, as if some strong hand had plucked and scattered them, whilst the mind had been intent on other things. The flowers had been brushed by some rude touch from the datura arborea, and lay on the white stones, shaming them with their own superior purity. A shower of orange blossoms almost covered the pavement near one of the entrances ; and the deep dent of a man's foot in the border, and a broken plant here, with an overturned pot there, showed marks of a rude and sudden exit, and told a tale of rejected love and unrestrained violence.

The dressing-bell rang, and Helen started from her reverie. She looked from the door, but the horseman was far on his road. She replaced the thrown down, tied up the broken, put away the fallen, and sighed as she finished her task, and the signs of ruin were removed. She grieved to look upon them herself : she would have grieved still more had they met other and less friendly eyes.

"Mr. Euston presents his compliments to Miss St. Maur, and hopes she is better," were the contents of a note delivered soon after.

"Miss St. Maur presents her compliments to Mr. Euston, and she is better," was the note sent in return.

"Do write a longer note to your cousin," said Mrs. Hargrave.

"Pardon me, aunt; it is cruelty to encourage hopes which can never be realized; and Mr. Euston's note proves he has already repented of his late repentance."

Mrs. Hargrave said no more, and her look of consciousness was not lost upon Helen.

CHAPTER XI.

Avec les gens qui par finesse écoutent tout, et parlent peu, parlez encore moins : ou, si vous parlez, dites peu de chose.

LA BRUYERE.

He comes! he comes! in glorious style!

SHANNON AND CHESAPEAKE.

THE next morning, before they had left the breakfast table, Lord Alford was announced. "More than a thousand and one welcomes!" said Helen, yielding both her hands to his grasp, whilst her looks spoke her thanks.

"I suppose, from your early visit, you have brought the flowers," remarked Mrs. Hargrave, pettishly; "I am sure I shall have cause to rejoice, for I have heard of nothing else. 'Are they come?' was her last question at night; her first in the morning."

Helen coloured; Alford smiled, and declaring himself to be the bearer of the flowers, played the agreeable to the old lady, till he restored her to good humour. The flowers were brought in and duly admired, and Helen and her visitor proceeded to the garden, after an admonition from Mrs. Hargrave, to remember that Robert was to be there at twelve.

"Now, *ma belle*," said Alford, "for the memory of our by-gone days of childish frankness, give me a clue to unravel this mystery, for my wit can only enable me to read half the riddle. Oh, Helen! Helen! I verily believe some horrid spell rests in these dark woods of yours. Dormer raced through them from north to south, from east to west, day after day, and always returned looking as if he had explored the Trophonian cave. The day before yesterday he came back in such a mood, that (thanks to Catherine's tormenting questions), if Spanish patriotism had not been out of fashion with the *Torés*, 'War to the knife!' must have been proclaimed between

them. Then, yesterday he started from Feldon (thanks to my discretion), with something of a bright look ; and lo, behold ! he leaves your woods looking as if he had been hanged for burking, or theft, or some such ungentlemanly crime, and was speeding to the abode of the condemned. Nor has the spell worked only upon him. The very name of Hurlestone makes Euston look like a stormy bear, outrageous at being placed in the Zoological Gardens ; and even I have no sooner entered its limits, than I feel inclined to quarrel with '*La Belle et La Bonne.*' Helen," he continued more seriously, " what amends can you make for having traversed my favourite project, and destroyed the peace of my dearest friend ?"

" Do not quarrel with me," said Helen, raising her beautiful eyes to his, with the large tears standing in them ready to overflow at a look. " You cannot grieve for this matter more deeply than I do ; but his passions are wild and fearful, and they alone must prevent his enjoying peace. My manner might have saved him what he termed the disgrace of a refusal."

" I cannot quarrel with you, Helen, were it only for those kind tears, but you must not think Dormer blames you ; he sends me to say all you can require, and to deliver his parting wishes and adieus."

" Is he gone then ?"

" He is : but may I hope, from that sigh and tone, that his departure is not unregretted ?"

" Were I to say it was not, you would give too strong a meaning to my words. I'd not wish that we should meet again, at least not yet ; but I do wish that we had parted in kindness."

" Yet you feel no anger."

" None !"

" Then may not time and assiduity effect some change ? His love is not to be rejected as a thing of little worth. Say it was a fear of Euston's violence, that influenced your rejection."

" No ! no ! To his own violence, not Robert's, he owes the decision. I should soon learn to tremble in his presence, and he would brook woman's fear as little as her opposition. If I have suffered, I may thank myself for listening to his eloquence after the first warning. Why did he not write an apology for yesterday's violence, but that his pride could not stoop so low."

Alford looked disconcerted, for his friend had refused to take pen in hand, notwithstanding his entreaties.

"Come! come!" said Helen, half smiling at his confusion: "leave your friend to himself. He has been too much flattered and petted, to bear a first disappointment with any tolerable degree of patience; but time will soften the remembrance, pride heal the wound, and we may yet be friends. If you had seen him at our two last meetings, to forget all before, you could not blame my decision."

"Something about a whining beggar, was there not? For I durst not question Dormer, and his ravings were not very intelligible. That a dirty piece of impertinence should step between me and my hopes!"

"If you feared then, what should I do hereafter?"

"Well! well! Perhaps you are right; and vexed as I am, I own he is scarcely worthy of you."

"We will talk no more then on this painful subject; but let me render you a thousand thanks for all your kindness."

"Not a thank, for I would keep the debt undiminished, and will hear of nothing more material than smiles. No looking saucy, and appearing to think the service light. I would almost as soon attempt to tame a pair of full grown lions to run in my curricule, as undertake to calm Robert Euston, when in one of his fiery moods. But for your note, and my consequent caution, yesterday's pastoral might have been converted into a tragedy. Euston's ill-humour was intolerable: first, he seemed out of sorts at the chance of your being there; and then he seemed still more out of sorts at your not being there; and so difficult was it to prevent his affronting Dormer, despite all my devices and strange manoeuvres, by which I acquired the character of a madman, that I much doubt my success if Percy had not left the field. When Euston discovered his absence, and I suppose guessed his errand, he was like a madman, and would have endangered the lives of himself and his steed, with his haste to reach Hurlestone—to say nothing of you and Dormer—had I not taken care, that by some unaccountable mistake, his horse should be at least four miles distant. I tell you what, Helen, his insolence is intolerable, and the world says you bend before his fury or his love; now I claim as a reward, that you think and act for yourself, and promise never to become Mrs. Euston."

"Do you seek to pain me as well as others?" asked Helen sorrowfully.

"Never!" replied Alford warmly, looking at her pale cheek and falling tears. "I am quite ashamed of my ill-humour; but Euston provoked me. I ask no promise, only let me advise you as a brother. You do not love your cousin, and he is no fitting guide for you."

"Must I invest you with that office?" said Helen, smiling through her tears.

"I fear you are too wise," smiling in return; "but, scatterbrain as I may be, I am a perfect Solomon when you are concerned. Why is Euston coming here at twelve?"

She gave him a softened account of part of what had passed, and ended by saying: "Now, that your friend has left the neighbourhood, you need not fear my acting freely, firmly, and fearlessly. So do but retain your good humour, despite Robert's tantrums, and I will apply to you in all my difficulties."

"Thank you, my second sister, Helen. Who knows but with such a hope, I may acquire the wisdom and steadiness of a Lord Chancellor. But time wears, and I have no wish to encounter your visitor, with whom you may be as firm and penetrating as you please. I must wish your aunt good morning, though I perceive she would rather see you Mrs. Euston than Lady Alford, and your cousin has his periodical fits of jealousy."

"Who sees deeper than the surface now, Alford? No one sees deeper than you. This is no news."

"Perhaps not; but, should I ever have any thing to conceal, I must shun your presence."

"Tell it at once with a good grace, and then you need not avoid me."

"I will think about it. Adieu!"

As Alford left Hurlestone Park by one gate, Mr. Euston entered it by another. Helen received him alone, returned a cold bow to his polite good morning; and thanks, almost as cold, for his kind enquiries concerning her health, after which neither spoke for some time. Helen had armed herself with all the coldness and firmness she could summon, to meet and over-awe his expected vehemence; but there was no vehemence with which to contend. He had acquired too good information as to Dormer's movements, to find any difficulty in conjecturing the truth; and the removal of all his fears on this point, joined to shame, and the apprehension lest Helen might prove inexorable, made him as humble and as willing to promise every thing, as the most exigent tyrant could have

desired. With such dispositions on one side, and no inclination to be harsh on the other, a repentant apology was made, and accepted ; but not without the fullest understanding, that Helen's had been no idle threat, and that she was, and would remain, unfettered and uncontrolled. All again looked bright and promising ; but Helen's very firmness and penetration forbade her to forget in the instant, and a doubt for the future still lingered on her mind, somewhat marring the pleasure of the present, and checking the open frankness of their intercourse.

That day he spent at Hurlestone ; the next he attended the election, when Mr. Howard was declared duly elected—the show of hands in his favour being so great, that Mr. Smug declined a contest ; and the day after he returned to town.

He had not long taken his leave, when, to Helen's surprise, Lady Catherine Alford made her appearance ; and to her still greater astonishment, announced her intention of spending the day with her.

"Never trouble about making fine speeches," she continued ; "there is an electioneering dinner at Marston, or I should not have come here. But you know I detest Port wine and politics, greasy freeholders, and grumbling expectants."

"Very well, then," replied Helen, smiling, "I shall only be commonly civil ; but tell me how dear Lady Marston and your brother are ?"

"My mother and Alford are as usual, the one suffering from patience, the other suffering from impatience. He holds this dinner in as much abhorrence as I do, and I am mistaken if he will not have terrified my father, and mystified his guests, before the first remove. By the way, Alford wanted me to bring a note, but I could not wait for it ; yet I promised to say to you 'that a riddle should be explained but to one, and that if he said more, a child would understand him.' His message puzzled one of larger growth, for this is an unknown tongue to me ; but I suppose you comprehend it."

"Indeed I do not, so you must take back my request for an explanation."

The morning passed in looking over Helen's portfolio, with a due portion of caustic remarks from Catherine, and playful parryings from her hostess. Mrs. Hargrave remained with them, contrary to her usual custom, and Helen could not but fancy her guest seemed to feel her presence as a restraint.

"Here are the Joneses !" cried Catherine, hastily. "Come and walk with me directly, Helen. If we stay, you will let

her in because she is poor ; and if I remain, I must be rude ; and one may as well endure a political dinner, as one of your homilies, Mrs. Jones, and the sentimental blonde. You have such a marvellous regard for the poor, one would think you had been a pauper. I verily believe you would rather affront a countess than a commoner."

Catherine's remarks were, for some time, more entertaining and less bitter than usual, till, complaining of fatigue, she threw herself on a seat, and insisted on Helen's occupying another, so as to allow her a full view of her face.

"Now I think of it, Helen," she began, abruptly, "where are you to be Mrs. Euston? Remember, I shall expect to be bridesmaid. Don't blush, child, and deny it; the whole county considers it a settled thing."

The abruptness of the question, and the look which accompanied it, amazed Helen, aware as she was that the young lady seldom spoke without a purpose. Alford's message came to her mind, and from that instant she was on her guard.

"The whole county must consider what it pleases, as I shall issue no placard on the subject; but Robert knows better, and I know better, and you know better," she added, looking steadily at her.

"Not I, indeed; you never made me your confidante, and as all the folks at Feldon said it was to be, and your cousin looked as black and fierce as a stormy November night, when I delivered your excuses, of course I thought what all the folks said was true. *De plus*, it appeared he had been with you late the night before, so I concluded the head-ache was a feint to hide your blushes. A very bad habit, that of your's, by the way, and amazingly inconvenient sometimes," keeping her eyes fixed full upon her the whole time she was speaking.

"It would be to you," replied Helen, meeting the look with one as fixed; "but I have no occasion for concealment, nor was I sufficiently versed in affairs of this sort, to understand that bidding adieu to a lady at ten in the evening, and being in an ill humour the next morning, was the sign of an approaching wedding."

"Then it really is not so? Tell the truth; you know I detect the Miss-ish manœuvres customary on those occasions."

"It would be an affront to your penetration to repeat the denial."

"Well, as your favourite, Mrs. Jones, says, when obliged to disbelieve a tit bit of scandal, 'There really is no giving

credit to any thing one hears!" But if not yet, I always set it down as certain that it will be. Talking of Mrs. Jones, what do you think is her last pet piece of news? She absolutely tries to make people believe that Mr. Percy Dormer, the heir of an ancient earldom, the admired of all admirers, the eloquent, the fastidious, the Cynosure of female eyes; to sum up all, Dormer the Superb, who might play the Turk, and sport a harem, did he not too much value his own repose, flew hither on a hyppogriffe, or some such animal, from Felton; placed his hand, his heart, his fortune, and himself, at the disposal of Miss St. Maur; and—was refused! Fortunately, the utter folly of such a report, and the impossibility of such a thing having occurred, will prevent any one's giving it a moment's credit."

"That is fortunate!" remarked Helen, calmly. "It is a pity but all her stories carried an antidote with them."

Catherine looked baffled for a moment, and then continued "It is a pity, as you say, that all her stories are not as marvellous as this, and then none could credit them. Yet I understand this is but half the story, and that there is something about Alford's coming over the next morning to plead his cause, and Mr. Euston arriving just after, to insist on an explanation."

"Quite a romance," remarked Helen, as quietly as before. "I should not be surprised, after what I heard, if she were to discover that you had come over in a fit of jealousy, to learn the truth and threaten to poison me; that would be a proper finale."

"Is that a snake?" screamed Lady Catherine, starting from her seat.

No snake was to be discovered, and when they were again seated, there was no trace of emotion on Catherine's features.

"What were we talking of before this interruption? Oh! I recollect now! It would be but just to Mr. Dormer, Helen, and a point of delicacy in you, to contradict the report publicly, and authorize your friends to do the same."

"I have too great a horror of publicity, to put forth an advertisement on the subject; but should Mrs. Jones presume to mention the subject to me, she shall not escape without one of the homilies of which you stand in so much dread; and, should you hear it mentioned, you will, of course, demonstrate its utter impossibility."

"Then, you authorize me to declare every where, no offer has been made?"

"Such an authority would be admitting the possibility of what you have declared to be impossible ; and silence brings the most expeditious death to a report."

"Ha ! I detect a blush, and begin to fear the poor moth thinks it may live in the blaze of the girandole."

"Ha ! the lip quivers ! Has not the poor moth already burnt its wings, and thus warns from experience ?"

This was carrying the war into the enemy's quarters, and Catherine said, angrily, "I should quarrel with this folly, did I not pity the delusion which it reveals. Dream not of Dormer's return, still less of his bending to you. I have heard him say nobility should wed with nobility, and thus the honourable stream be kept untainted with meaner blood. Depend upon it, he will marry from ambition."

"He has my best wishes for his happiness, let him wed with whom he may ; and, but that you are too wise to place your hopes on a volcano, I should be inclined to think the imagined ending to Mrs. Jones's story was not as impossible in your eyes as the commencement."

"You are angry, my dear," said Lady Catherine, making this false assertion in the contemptuous tone of assumed superior calmness. "I am sorry for it ; but our long friendship must excuse my impertinence in giving you a warning, and I shall contradict the report, in your name, lest you should be accused of indelicacy, and the vanity of wishing the idea to be believed."

"I have no dread of being accused of either, and doubt if the report has spread as widely as you seem to intimate. I suspect Mrs. Jones has paid the penalty of her usual gossipry, and been accused of saying more than she really has."

Helen's penetration again won a confirmation of her surmise ; and Catherine, weary of a losing game, said with pretended carelessness : "If you do not claim a monopoly of all the doubts this morning, perhaps you will allow me to indulge in one as to the prudence of my remaining longer here."

"There can be no doubt as to its imprudence," replied Helen, unable to suppress an arch smile ; "you find it too keen."

Catherine favoured her with a stare, meant to express : "What do you intend by saying this to me ?" Then drawing her shawl around her, and criticising, without much charity or politeness, the growth and arrangement of trees, shrubs, and flowers, she walked towards the house with the intention of gaining from Mrs. Hargrave the information so provokingly

kept back by Helen. Here again she was defeated, for a friend of that lady's joined the party at dinner, and prevented any further exercise of her questioning powers.

The practised deceiver had arrived with the certainty of winning the knowledge she desired; yet, did she return home with the mortifying feeling, that she had revealed something and learnt nothing; that the practised had been seen through, and thwarted by the unpractised; and that good feeling and feminine delicacy had enabled one who scorned deceit, to withstand taunts and gibes, and baffle the deceiver.

As she took her leave, she asked, "Shall we meet you on Friday, at the Charletons? A grand display, I conclude from the long notice, of talking and tartlets, bustle and bonbons, with the garnishing *niaseries* of my son John and his horse Conqueror, and my daughter Harriet. I understand you pique yourself on doing the pretty, and playing popular; and Alford horrified my grave papa by saying, 'If you stood for the county, you would certainly be returned;' so to give you a piece of advice, have your band put on too high or too low, or commit some such momentous *faux pas*—for the best way to win her favour is, to furnish her with an opportunity of improving; but, I forgot you knew her before."

"I thank you for this hint; with a few more of your instructions I shall become mistress of the art."

"No doubt. Good night!"

"On what subject were you conversing so earnestly," inquired Helen of the Misses Carleton, Jones, and Mahon, as she descended from her carriage, and walked with them up Mansford Hill.

"On what could it be, but of the new occupant of Colville Lodge?" replied Miss Mahon, the pleasing and unaffected daughter of an affected and manœvering mamma.

"But who may this expected occupant be? for I know nothing of the matter."

"Then pray do not proclaim your ignorance, for I doubt if even Miss St. Maur would not be less thought of at the present moment than the poorest person in the land, possessing the memory to relate, or the talent to invent, a new anecdote of this expected."

"I owe you no thanks for this mortifying intelligence, particularly as you have afforded me no enlightenment as to the sex, name, or condition, of this hero or heroine who is to be."

"I concluded your penetration had discovered the sex; then, for the condition, none in a lowly state are anxiously

expected ; and for the name, there is a something in it so irresistibly euphonious, that I accuse Miss Jones of having had some share in its invention. Guess, guess, guess ?”

“I am the worst hand in the world a riddle-me-ree, so take pity on my feminine curiosity, and tell me the name of this new *Louis le désiré*.”

“It was in very pity that I withheld it, seeing the fearful effect it has produced on two of my friends ; but, since you will tempt the danger, the risk be on your own head. Allow me to introduce you, nominally, to the Hon. Reginald Fitzgerald de Roos, only son of Baron Fitzallan, of Fitzallan Castle, in the county of Northumberland. And now tell me what effect this talismanic name has produced ?”

“As much surprise and wonderment as you could have anticipated. What can induce Mr. de Roos to settle himself in the country, before the shooting or hunting season ; but I suppose he only intends remaining a few days ?”

“Oh yes, he is to remain six months at least !” exclaimed the young ladies at the same moment ; and then Miss Carleton, in her usually flighty manner, detailed all she had heard concerning the new-comer.

“Mr. Wheeble has lent him the house for a twelvemonth, and his horses and servants are come down, and he is expected himself to-day or to-morrow ; and he is very handsome, and very elegant, and very rich, and all the ladies are in love with him ; but they say he is very particular, and that his wife must be perfect ; and they say too, he is very lively, and a beautiful waltzer ; and that he will make the place quite gay, for he is very fond of female society, and will give lots of parties. I am so glad, for it is very dull and stupid !”

“But what is his inducement for coming here at all ?” again inquired Helen.

“I understand,” replied Miss Jones, in a sentimental tone, “he says he is weary of the gaude and glare of pomp and pride, and heartless nothings of the great world ; and that he has long sighed to wander amid the sylvan scenes, or recline beneath some umbrageous oak, the giant of the forest, listening to the gentle murmur of streams, the bleating of the fleecy flocks, or the delicious warbling of the nightingale.”

“Indeed !” said Helen, laughing incredulously, “a most marvellously simple taste for an admired young man about town, heir to a title. It is to be a second edition of *Arcadia*, I see ; so I conclude we must all sport croaaks, and transform ourselves into *Phillises* and *Damarises* of those innocent times.

Permit me, young ladies, to offer you the choice of all my flocks, and I will speak to the steward to have a sheep-washing for the occasion. But amongst your enumeration of his accomplishments, you forgot to mention his singing Moore's most tender ditties to perfection."

"Does he? Then you know him?"

"Only by report."

"What did you hear of him?"

"Just what a missy flirty girl of seventeen, who had had no mother to guide her, might be expected to say of a handsome, lively, and elegant young man of six-and-twenty, heir to a title, and universally admired; and who, above all, had said and looked more than one specious flattery about the languishing lustre of her dark eyes."

"Ah, Miss St. Maur!" said Miss Jones sentimentally, "you are laughing at us; but though you have hitherto been all-sufficient to yourself, the time may yet come when you will feel the exquisite delight and enchantment of meeting with a sympathetic soul."

"All in due time," said Helen, laughing; though it might be that a thought of Dormer made that laugh a little less light than usual. "But who comes here with his britzcha and four? Your neighbourhood is become gay indeed. *Louis le desiré* himself, perhaps?"

All eyes were directed to the approaching carriage, and Helen repented having in her gaiety started the supposition, when she saw that the Misses Carleton and Jones were determined nothing should escape their observation. The hill, up which the young ladies were walking, was long and tedious rather than steep, bounded by high green banks on either side; and from the nature of its material and the late dry weather, was almost ankle-deep in dust, except just at the edge, where there was a narrow green path. The bank was too steep to attempt to climb it, without its having the appearance of romping; and aware of Miss Carleton's inclination to turn the appearance into a reality, Helen forbore to make the attempt, and made up her mind to bear the infliction with all the philosophy she could summon, though every movement of the rapidly approaching britzcha raised such clouds of dust, that they endured the horrors of smothering by anticipation. Still she regretted she had not her parasol to protect her from the dust and the stare of the traveller, should he be inclined to return the prying looks of her two companions. But nothing seemed further from the traveller's mind than any act in the slightest

degree discourteous. When the britzcha had approached near enough for Miss Carleton to decide, in far too loud a tone to please Helen, that its sole occupant was quite an Adonis; the traveller leant forward and gave the postillions particular orders to walk their horses past the ladies, and be careful not to dust them. The orders were strictly obeyed, and the look and slight inclination of the head, not amounting to a bow, as he came opposite to them, spoke so much of courtesy and respectful admiration, that the most critical must have approved.

"'Tis he, 'tis he!" almost screamed Miss Carleton, in her delight. "I saw the coronet on his carriage. I see he has just stopped your servant to ask who we are."

"Pray be a little more quiet, and not speak so loud," said Helen, reprovingly, and trying to prevent the young lady from looking back.

"Nonsense!" replied Miss Carleton, pertly, "no one likes shy people; and for my part, I think they are always very stupid."

"There is a great difference between shyness and propriety."

"Oh, you are so very demure! If I had your fortune I would do any thing. I wonder what he said to the servant, and what he thought of us?"

"Neither can be very material to your peace of mind;" returned Helen, fearful she might question the domestics.

"I don't care; I should like to know. I am sure it was very polite in him to walk the horses, and he is very handsome; such eyes! and such hair! and such a beautiful eye-glass! I hope papa will call upon him."

"The air of graceful command with which he issued his orders, and the sympathy for human suffering which the silver tones of his clear and liquid voice exhibited, are proofs of his high descent, and delicate and enlightened mind. Then his chivalrous motto, '*D'Amour et Loyauté*.' Oh, I am sure he adores Byron, and Moore, and is full of sympathetic feeling and gentle sensibility."

"Of that there can be no doubt. With such a motto! and such an air! and such a voice! and such a pair of eyes! and such an eye-glass! he must be the epitome of romance and perfection!" said Miss Mahon, with much gravity, in answer to Miss Jones's rhapsody, whilst Helen with difficulty repressed her laughter, as she added,—

“And I warn you in the words of some old ballad :—

‘Now I forbid ye ladies a’,
That wear goud in your hair,
To come or gang by Carter Ha’a,
For young Tam Lane is there.’

and if report speak true, the Hon. Reginald Fitzgerald de Roos is one,

‘Who bends his knee at every shrine,
And leaves his heart at none.’”

“Thank you for the warning. I can keep my own any day,” replied the flippant Miss Carleton, drawing herself up, and placing her enormous sleeves so as to make them look still more enormous. “Perhaps you speak from experience; I am sure Mr. de Roos will be ten times as agreeable as that Mr. Dormer people made such a fuss about, with his proud looks, as if we were only fit to be his slaves; and his voice, that was only heard once in an hour, like a church-clock. I am sure I think there will be no comparison between them.”

“I should imagine not,” replied our heroine, without noticing her ill nature; “if Mr. Dormer spoke but once in the hour, like the church-clock, like that also his face and his words always conveyed valuable information.”

At this moment they were joined by Mr. John Carleton, and almost before he had concluded his devoirs to the other young ladies, his sister began,—“Oh, John! you must call on Mr. de Roos. We have just met him, and he is so polite, and so agreeable, and so handsome, you can’t think. We must cause papa to ask him on Friday.”

“I think I shall call upon him,” replied her brother, as he arranged his shirt collar, and then glanced at his well-booted leg, “for Johnson tells me he has got a horse very like my Conqueror, that won at Newmarket. It cannot be as handsome though, I am sure. Now I think of it, Miss St. Maur, you have never seen my horse Conqueror; an uncommon fine animal, I assure you! Come now, and I will show him to you.”

Again the temptation to laugh was almost irresistible; for she had seen the horse about twenty times, each invitation prefaced by the same speech. It had been his last question two years since; it was his first now. With some difficulty she suppressed the risible propensity, and having reached the top of the hill, and the gate to Mansford, she took her leave,

accompanied by the two young ladies, whom she had offered to set down on her way home.

CHAPTER XII.

Whate'er he did was done with so much ease,
In him alone 'twas natural to please ;
His motions all accompanied with grace,
And paradise was opened in his face.

DRYDEN.

Oh, wad some pow'r the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as others see us !
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
And foolish notion :
What airs in dress a'n gait wad lea'e us.

BURNS.

TIME has passed ; and, behold ! the day of Mrs. Carleton's grand dinner has arrived, and our heroine is on her way to attend it ; but before she can reach Mansford, we must claim the old-fashioned privilege of introducing the place and its inhabitants. No sooner was the lodge gate passed, than an acute observer might have understood the character of the person who held the chief control over the grounds and buildings. There were rows of pales thrown down at opposite extremities of a long range, that it would have taken double the number of workmen employed to put up in time to prevent the intrusion of sundry lean cows and half-starved ponies, which deserted the well-fed lanes and hedge rows for the more luxurious pasturage of the park, as an inclosure of forty acres was called. There were old trees marked for destruction, and some of their tops and lops encumbering the road, whilst young ones were withering to be planted, and scorching at the idea of such an unseasonable removal. There was a dab of mortar here, a pile of bricks there, a chimney begun, a garden wall in embryo, a stable half pulled down, and a coach-house in ruins. Who could be an hour in the society of Mrs. Carleton, and doubt that she held rule over the building and unbuilding, planting in and cutting down, paling, gravelling, and what not ? She must have been descended from Thalaba the Destroyer. When first married, her means had been con-

fined ; but some five years since, a distant relation had left her husband forty thousand pounds, since which period she had been gradually increasing in dignity, at least in her own eyes, and now at times scarcely acknowledged a superior. Every thing that she censured must be faulty ; every thing that she did, or counselled to be done, must be perfection. There could be no appeal from a decision of hers—she was a Protestant Pope—an infallible chancellor. The emphatic “ I say—I think—I did,”—forbade all hope of the revision of a sentence. In person she was very tall, and very thin ; and having once heard herself called a fine woman, thereupon assumed a queen-like dignity, meant to overawe all meaner spirits. Then she had rather a taste for patronising, when it did not interfere with her own pleasures ; there was a grandeur in the very idea that suited her royal mood. Possessing neither taste or tact, her imitations of fashion very nearly resembled travesties. Her rooms looked as if the modes of the last hundred years had been whirled round in a tourbillon, and allowed to remain just where they had alighted. The rich and the poor Mrs. Carleton were always clashing, and made a most ludicrous jumble.

Mr. Carleton was a rather good-natured, talkative man, yielding the management of things at home to his wife ; who, as far as her powers would permit, was a practical illustration of Dr. Clarke’s recipe for happiness ; for her irons were never out of the fire. Poker, fire-shovel, and tongs, were never allowed one moment to get cold. Mr. Carleton was besides a most indefatigable magistrate, thinking nothing of a ride of thirty miles to attend a justice meeting, deciding sometimes wisely, sometimes unwisely, and only severe upon radicals, poachers, and wood stealers.

Their only son was a rather genteel, silly-looking young man, principally known to all the country as the owner of his horse Conqueror. This one idea seemed to have swallowed up every other, and to exercise unlimited mastery over his mind. His sister Harriet, who has already shown herself to be a flippant flirt, was a fine-looking young woman ; at least so the gentleman said, for she was tall and large,* the height of whose ambition was to gain admirers, and to be thought a wit and a dasher.

The house was a very irregular building, and had been added to under Mrs. Carleton’s direction, till there was not a good room in it.

* As may be guessed, I am of thy dimensions myself.

The other members of this dinner party were Mr. and Mrs. Daniell, who, with less fortunes, were more pleasant and elegant. The gentlemen were rival talkers and rival magistrates; the ladies rival housekeepers, and sometimes rival improvers. Mrs. Daniell's temper was as superior to Mrs. Carleton's as Mr. Carleton's was to Mr. Daniell's. Besides these, there were the party from Marston; and Mr., Mrs., and Miss Mahon; he the most good-natured and meddlesome of mortals, ever ready to assist, ever eager to procure, were it a commission or a cucumber, a monkey or a monarchy. With such a temper it may be imagined he sometimes thwarted his wife, who could scarcely perform the most common act without manœuvring. Besides exercising this tortuous talent, she enacted the part of the tender mother; and occasionally, when not too much crossed by her husband's meddling, the loving wife. The daughter has already been described as pleasing, amiable, and unaffected; the shrinking victim, but never the participator of her mother's plans.

Such was the party assembled at Mansford, with the addition of two or three unremarkable young men, when Miss St. Maur was announced. The usual salutations had been given and received; the usual questions put and answered; a more than usual bustle occasioned by the re-seating; the last month's weather had been discussed, as well a horrid murder, and an ingenious robbery; and still no dinner was announced.

There was a pause. One of the unremarkable young men tried to get up a conversation about a mysterious occurrence, but it fell to the ground after one or two short and stupid remarks. Symptoms of yawning appeared amongst some of the company. The decision of a justice meeting was hurried over by Mr. Carleton; the "I say, and I said," of Mrs. Carleton was hushed, as she looked out of the window and fidgeted as much as her dignity would permit; even Mr. Daniell was silent, and Miss Carleton had ceased flirting; whilst Lady Catherine openly showed her disposition for sleep. All looked wearied and worried. Oh! the horrors of the half-hour before dinner in an ill-managed house, with an ill-assorted party and an intact host and hostess! A servant entered the room and whispered to his mistress. The lady frowned, uttered a monosyllable, dismissed him, and then tried to look grander than before. The gentlemen huddled closer together, for fear they should be called on to entertain the ladies; whilst the ladies themselves seemed sadly in want of the entertainment denied them. "Silence settled wide and still," and in the words of

the American journalist, there was "a most awful pause." Each looked at the other, as if to ask why those others were silent; then all felt the awkwardness, and some tried to think of matter for discourse. But who, unblest with supereminent genius, can discover any thing to say at the very moment when it is absolutely necessary something should be said?

There was a crash in the hall, as of the demolition of plates, and the cry of a dog. What a relief! Every face but one brightened up. A malicious observer might have fancied all assembled to have been china manufacturers, so revivifying was this destruction of crockery, on all but the lady of the house. A cloud came over her brow; her look became more queen-like, and she talked at her son John, instead of to him, her invariable custom when offended.

"I said some time ago, that Mr. John Carleton's dog should not come into the house, but I find he is admitted still. It is rather an extraordinary thing, I consider, that my orders are not obeyed. Some people choose to have dogs in the house, but I say it is not a fit place for them;" and here the lady drew herself up with the air of an empress.

Mr. John Carleton paid no heed to these remarks, but gaining courage from the silence having been broken, amid the dissertation that ensued concerning the breaking of china by dogs, children, and servants, he advanced towards Lady Catherine, and having adjusted his neckcloth, and run his fingers through his hair, asked her if she rode as much as ever; and then, without waiting an answer, continued, "Now I think of it; talking of riding, you never saw my horse Conqueror, that won at Newmarket. An uncommon fine animal, I assure you. He shall be brought round for you to look at.

"The lady yawned, then gave a stare,
Sudden! terrific! strange! and queer!"

and closed her eyes as if going to sleep, whilst the gentleman drew back, abashed and astounded.

"Most adorable Miss St. Maur," said Alford, who, by passing round the formidable female circle, had obtained a standing place behind her and Miss Mahon; "take pity on me, and lend me your fan, for the odour of burnt soups, and over-turned fricandeaux, has distressed the extreme sensibility of my olfactory organs; and a syncope may be the consequence." Then fanning himself violently, he continued, "As this feast must be demolished, I vote for killing 'my horse Conqueror,'

and trying to rival the Chevalier de Beaujeu in our ingenious modes of dressing him."

"Hush! hush! you will be overheard."

"Never fear, only look indifferent: that most fortunate of crashes has set every tongue going again. I am afraid 'the fat is in the fire' will turn out both a saying and doing. Why does not our hostess, as is her wont, begin a tirade at the cook, and furnish us with the history of every one who has offered, been engaged, and dismissed, since she first kept house?"

"Will you never see the indecorum of ridiculing your hostess? By Miss Carleton's manner, I guess the cook is not in fault; but do try and appease Catherine, for I am sure she meditates being rude."

The caution came too late: that young lady had already turned to Mrs. Carleton, and was speaking in the blandest tone imaginable.

"My dear Mrs. Carleton, what apology shall I make for coming either an hour or a day too soon? and how can I sufficiently admire the patient politeness, with which you have borne an unfortunate *contre temps*?"

"I am obliged to you for your apology, Lady Catherine Alford," replied her hostess, endeavouring to make still longer her very long neck; "but it was totally uncalled for, and I trust no one has ever yet found me deficient in patience or politeness."

"I beg your pardon again," said Catherine in the same bland tone; "but I really thought we had not dined. You must forgive me: I am such an absent creature, I never think of any thing. Is it not time, Alford, to order the carriage? I have been so absent, I had quite forgotten we have had dinner, and was only thinking what an immense time we had been waiting for it."

The weariness of delay had again nearly hushed the conversation, and this remark was lost on few. Some looked amazed at its cool impertinence, whilst some turned away to laugh. Mrs. Carleton's anger would have been awful, but the offender was an Earl's daughter, and one not to be attacked with impunity, so she contented herself with turning on her a look, which must have destroyed a nervous person, and then talking at her husband in a loud tone.

"I think some stand should be made against the increasing lateness of the hours. Mr. Carleton wished our dinner to be at half-past six, but I said 'No;' if people cannot eat a good dinner at six, they must not expect to be received at Mans-

ford. Persons may think it fashionable to be late, but I say true politeness is to keep no one waiting. If I were Mr. Carleton, I should order dinner immediately ;” and having delivered this attack with all due emphasis and dignity, she half rose, spread out her voluminous dress so as to occupy a much larger space ; and then, placing her hands before her, looked very grave and very grand.

“ Here he comes !” cried Miss Carleton joyfully.

“ Who comes ?” asked many voices.

“ The Honourable Mr. De Roos !” replied the young lady pompously.

“ Whew !” whistled Lord Alford. “ Now it comes out ! Wait three quarters of an hour for a Baron’s son : it must be an hour for an Earl’s at the least.”

“ Hope it not !” said Helen laughing, “ or you may chance to lose your dinner. Your tormenting humour will never allow you to rival this new hero.”

“ Now shall you be plagued with my society at dinner, for this impertinence.”

The appearance of the long-expected guest had again set every tongue in motion, and question and answer, in accordance with the different moods of the different speakers, converted the drawing-room at Mansford into a minor Babel.

“ I wonder if he is a magistrate ?” said Mr. Carleton.

“ De Roos ! De Roos !” murmured Lord Marston. “ I wonder what are his political connections.”

“ A new comer ! He must want a great many things,” said Mr. Mahon ; “ I must assist him.”

“ What an ugly habit you have of stooping, my dear,” whispered Mrs. Mahon to her daughter, as she tucked in a string and arranged her scarf.

But little time was allowed for question or answer. Four horses whirled on the carriage with thought-like speed, and before conjectures were half exhausted, the door was thrown open to its full extent, and the Hon. Mr. de Roos announced. Every tongue was hushed, every eye turned towards the door. Unacquainted with a single creature in the room, and aware, as he could not fail to be, that he would be looked on by all, the idea of his entrance might have terrified a shy man to death, and made even a bold one look awkward.

“ I mean to be spitefully critical on the *boo* and *debut* of this maker of waiters,” whispered Alford to Helen.

“ Will you never be charitable, or cease to terrify Catherine’s fashionable ears with your miserable puns ?”

"Who can wash the blackamore white!"

It is most possible that others besides Alford were critically inclined; but no sooner had the stranger made his appearance, than criticism was disarmed. His slight and elegant figure was well attired, with scarcely the shadow of coxcombry. The most fastidious could hardly have found a fault; for whatever he wore, or whatever he did, instantly received the stamp of propriety. His bow was grace itself—not studied, not formal, but elegant, animated, yet respectful. His manner, with all the ease of high birth and high breeding, was untinctured by pride or pretension. But what, perhaps, won him more favour than all besides, at least in the eyes of the young, was the wearing one arm in a sling, and having a long narrow black patch on his right temple. It was impossible to doubt, for an instant, that the delay had been involuntary, even before a word had been said in explanation; and yet scarce a moment elapsed ere that explanation was given, and the silver tones of his mellifluous voice, as Miss Jones would have said, must have convinced the most incredulous.

"How shall I express my regret, or hope for pardon, for having kept you waiting? I can only trust that the simple truth will gain my forgiveness. I was obliged to go to * * * to-day on particular business, but should have been punctual, had I not been compelled to walk home, from the overturn of my carriage. I fear, instead of being so late, I should have sent an excuse; but I had not sufficient self-denial, to deprive myself of so much anticipated pleasure."

The apology was nominally addressed to Mr. Carleton; but, as he spoke of "anticipated pleasure," his eye glanced round the circle, and all felt themselves included.

Mr. Carleton said more than was requisite, and his lady was flustered in endeavouring to be sufficiently condescending.

"I hope you are not hurt?" burst from several lips.

"Nothing but a trifling scratch. I am quite ashamed to wear a sling, lest I should be suspected of seeking to appear interesting."

"How did the accident happen?" inquired Miss Carleton: then, before he had spoken six words, she screamed, "Dear me! how shocking! I am sure you are very much hurt; let me get you some *eau de Cologne*!"

"Permit me to detain you," as she was flying out of the room; "and do not, by my occasioning you trouble, really make me regret the trifling accident. My valet, who is no bad surgeon, has already dressed it."

"Dressed it!" screamed the young lady again; "then you are wounded! Dear me, how interesting!"

"Miss St. Maur," said Alford, in a low voice, "lend me your boa to hang myself in; I shall never otherwise be able to compete with this interesting stranger."

"Rather copy some of his courtesy."

"*Et tu, Brute!* nay, then my doom is sealed."

"I hope you do not suffer!" said Mrs. Mahon, in her sweetest, most sympathizing tone, rendered still sweeter by a something almost approaching to a lisp. "You should be very careful not to let any thing touch the wounded part. Caroline, my dear, move a little further that way, and let us make a quiet seat for Mr. De Roos between us. You really must let me prescribe for you. I had, unhappily, a long practice in these things, from nursing my poor brother, who was wounded at Waterloo." Here she sighed piteously, and Mr. De Roos looked his thanks. "Caroline, my sweet love," she continued—but Caroline's head was turned the other way, and before the mother could arrange matters to her satisfaction, the husband's meddling marred the wife's schemes.

"Did you say you were wounded? Do, pray, let Mr. Pettigrew, our surgeon, look at it; these are not things to be trifled with. I have known one or two people die from neglected wounds. I will desire Mr. Pettigrew to call to-morrow morning. Did not you say your carriage was injured? I will send over my coachmaker, and if I can find time, I will ride over, and look at it myself. I have some little knowledge in these affairs."

Then, before he could possibly receive thanks or denial, he turned to our heroine—"Ah, Miss St. Maur! I am so delighted. I have at last procured you the black and white mice you desired. I was sure I had heard of some in Cumberland, so I wrote to a friend in Sussex to write to another friend in Yorkshire, as I knew he had a relation in Cumberland; and he applied to the High Sheriff, who was a particular friend of his, and with great difficulty he succeeded in getting a couple; and Sir Charles Devereux has promised to bring them down when he returns from grouse-shooting. Ah, pray don't say any thing about it. I never think of trouble, if I can serve a friend;" and he turned to console with Mrs. Daniell on not having yet been able to procure her cousin a cadetship.

"What in the name of all that is meddling, can you want with black and white mice!" inquired Alford of the laughing

Helen, who was bending over a print to conceal her merriment. "Why the High Sheriff of Cumberland, and Sir Charles Devereux, will take you for an old maid or an idiot."

"I shall but share the fate of wiser people; great characters are rarely understood."

"I cannot bear that any ridicule should attach to you. Did you really desire these animals?"

"Far otherwise, and can only understand the matter by recollecting that, two years since, I told a story about black and white mice to little Laura Mahon."

"Then do tell the man you don't want them."

"Not now that he has had the pleasure of getting them. There cannot be much trouble in keeping a couple of mice, and it would be cruel to refuse them."

"You are too good-natured by half, Helen. I verily believe if the meddler got the High Sheriff of Cumberland to procure, and Sir Charles Devereux to bring down, a cap and bells, that you would wear them."

"No, I would transfer them to you;" said she archly.

"I deserve that for trying to quarrel with you; but, remember, I furnish a kitten to play with the mice."

"In pity don't, for I have about a dozen already, bought from cruel boys."

"No wonder you wanted the mice then."

The announcement of dinner put a stop to all further conversation. Here was a scene of bustle and confusion! Some coming forward who should have hung back; some hanging back, who should have come forward; whilst the host and hostess, by giving contrary hints, made matters ten times worse. At length, Mr. Carleton led off Lady Catherine, and Lord Marston's proposition of the paired pairing, and leaving the single ones to their own inclinations, being agreed to, he himself gallantly led in the mistress of the revels.

"Come, Helen," said Alford, "I would not miss the scene of the placing at table for something." Away they walked, he turning back his head occasionally to mark the proceedings of those behind. Miss Carleton seemed to consider the stranger as her lawful prize, whilst he resigned himself to his fate without any apparent reluctance. There was the same scene of confusion on the seating in the dining-room, as there had been on the rising in the drawing-room. All the six hundred and fifty-eight members of the House of Commons, could not have caused more commotion in taking their seats. Mrs. Carleton wished for two titled supporters; whilst Mrs. Mahon

warned her daughter first of the heat, and then of the cold, as Mr. De Roos passed from one side of the table to the other ; and Mr. Mahon disoblige one half of the company, by trying to oblige the other. At last, even Alford was weary of the bustle, and afraid of being obliged to change neighbours, exclaimed, "I vote that we sit as we stand."

"I second the motion," said Mr. De Roos, who was between Miss Mahon and Miss Carleton, and exactly opposite our heroine.

Amidst the laughter occasioned by this Irish proposition, the company were seated.

It has been said that the English meet to eat, and the French to talk ; but in the present instance, tongue and palate were employed with such laudable impartiality, that it would have puzzled the most discriminating to have decided, whether the party was most French or English. The dinner, like the manners of the hostess, exhibited the assumption of grandeur without the reality, and was an attempt to engraft the ease, lightness, and elegance of the present day, on the hospitality, but stiff and lumbering substantiality of the past. But the delay had made the guests hungry ; many of them had the neighbours they liked, and most looked pleased but Lady Catherine and the hostess.

"I never gave Mrs. Carleton credit for tact before," remarked Alford to Helen, secure of not being overheard, amid the clatter of plates, knives and forks ; and the still louder clatter of tongues ; "but the most inveterate enemy could not deny her the praise of having fitted her dinner to her company. The most delicate morceaux, food for sylphs, are fainting at the contiguity of large ill-trussed joints, and the round of beef is weeping tears of blood, at having its dish garnished with cabbages ; whilst good breeding is frightened from her propriety, at seeing the black unnapkin'd thumb of that burley groom intruding on those Sévre plates. So much for the body's food, now for the mind's. There is the fashionable and nonchalante Lady Catherine Alford, who occasionally holds wonder and animation *trop prononcés* to be elegant, bored with the 'sayings and doings' of country justices, and ragged vulgar on one side, and with the inane amazement of a simple youth at the sublime grandeurs of the Zoological Garden, 'Tam O'Shanter,' or some wax-work, on the other ; whilst Mr. John Carleton has just offered to help her to a pâté, that he might say, 'Talking of pâtés, I remember that Patie was the name of one of the horses that ran when my horse Conqueror

won at Newmarket. A monstrous fine animal! I assure you. I will order him round that you see him.' I am convinced he insists on his mother's having the dish, that it may furnish an introduction to his favourite subject. Then there is the delicate Mrs. Mahon, who talks of boiled chicken as almost too strong for her sensitive nerves, having something to manœuvre out of her host, has been obliged to allow a plate to be set before her, with a whole slice from the round of beef, two enormous carrots, and a whole head of cabbage. Worse! there is the elegant, the delicate, the refined, Mr. De Roos, who declares a woman should live on air, her motions be like the stately swan's sailing on a summer sea, her voice like the dying tone of a harp, and who, report says, never even from his birth imagined an inelegant thought, and whose speech flows as if modulated to the gentle breathing of the flute, condemned to the martyrdom of listening and replying to the shrill flippancies of an underbred flirt, and would-be dasher. Oh, the incongruities of such a dinner and such a party!"

"You have not enumerated a quarter," said Helen, half smilingly half reproachingly, "there is Lord Alford, who with one of the kindest hearts man ever had, abuses the hospitality of his host, by ridiculing himself and company at his own table; and, like his hostess, finds fault with all, and amends none."

"Who is severe now, Helen? But you interrupted me; there is Miss St. Maur with kindness in her looks, and essential salt of lemons in her words, saying cruel things to an old friend, for the sake of two indefensible bores, and an insinuating coxcomb."

"Are you gone clean daft? as Catherine declared not an hour since; or have you a meaning?"

Your question is complimentary; but I have a meaning. You have been so taken up with watching this interesting sufferer, as Miss Carleton calls him, that you have paid but a divided attention to all my clever things ever since we sat down to table."

"Then I suppose I must plead guilty, and trust to your mercy; for I own I have found something particularly interesting in Miss Carleton's sufferer."

"Have a care Helen, or I shall be jealous."

"You jealous!"

"Don't look so amazed! Jealous for Dormer."

Helen blushed, perhaps the more as she felt Mr. De Roos was looking at her; then rallying, replied "There must be

no jealousy for him; we can never be other than we are; the warmest well-wishers."

"*Che sara sara!*" said Alford, in a tone of vexation; "some wondrous charm dwells in a sling, it makes a coxcomb interesting, and a sensible man stupid."

"What spell is on you, that you cannot call things by their right names?" replied she archly.

"He is a coxcomb," repeated Alford, rather loudly.

"My bo-a to your sable cloak, he is something more. Let us change the subject, for I suspect he is the Fine Ear of the fairy tale; but watch in your own careless way, and we will compare notes after dinner."

"Agreed. And now let me help you to this cabinet, whose ingredients seem as incongruous as the party."

"Hush, Alford!" exclaimed Lord Marston, whose political ear had caught the words cabinet and incongruous, "I should imagine—nay, I have every reason to think, indeed—no sensible man can entertain a belief, that any cabinet formed by his most gracious majesty can be incongruous."

"Indeed!" said the mischievous Alford, "then report speaks false; for it says that Lords P. and T. nearly came to fisticuffs in the very presence; whilst Mr. O. declared he must resign, for, that Lord R. was so very vulgar, he could not possibly act with him any longer."

Lord Marston's horror may be imagined, but cannot be described. A boxing match reported between members of the cabinet! A commoner decline to act with a peer on account of his vulgarity! And all this said by his own son, in the hearing of more than sixteen ladies and gentlemen, and five servants. His lordship absolutely shuddered, and felt all the horrors of the beheading, quartering, and fixing the limbs on the Tower-gate.

"If you have any pity for me, Helen, faint! My father looks quite awful, and I verily believe will commit me to the Tower, or the arms of Somnos."

"You have brought too bright a colour into my cheeks to give me a chance of success."

"Lord Alford," began his father, in a tone tremulous from horror.

"It comes, it comes," whispered Alford, "a diversion must be made at any risk;" and with a dexterous movement of his hand, deemed by all but Helen, and perhaps Mr. De Roos, accidental, he overturned the wine-cooler into the lap of his next neighbour, one of the unremarkable gentlemen.

Up jumped the doomed to avoid the deluge, and by his awkward hurry occasioned the downfall of his plate, full of a rich gravy ; some portion of which splashed over the delicate Mrs. Mahon, whilst the backward movement of the first sufferer, forcing two footmen in contact, accomplished the demolition of two Sévre plates, the spilling of the contents on the best carpet, and the extension of one of the men on the floor.

"A most magnificent diversion truly," whispered Helen ; whilst Alford, aghast at the mighty mischief he had done, answered only by a deprecating look.

Lord Marston's speech came to an abrupt conclusion—some tittered—some laughed outright—whilst "What is the matter ?" "How did it happen ?" "I hope you are not hurt." "Take away the broken glass," &c. &c., mingled with the screams and gentle hysterics of the sensitive Mrs. Mahons, the apologies of the culprits, and the good-natured assurances of Mr. Carleton ; some time elapsed before the bustle had subsided and the company were again seated.

"I have a capital receipt for mending china," said Mr. Mahon ; "or, now I think of it, I can match your plates, and I will write about it this very evening. There is Jack Horton will do any thing for me. Going to Havre, I will get him to speak to Mr. Dashwood, to ask Colonel Jenkins, who is living near Sévre, to procure the plates for you."

"I am much obliged to you ; but I will not give you that trouble," said the lady of the mansion, assuming more stately air than ever, and speaking for the first time since the *contre temps*, for she had only bowed to the apologies : "I said to my children that, if by any awkwardness the set were broken, I should not think of filling it up again ; but, being humble, should content myself with English for the future. Some people think foreign china indispensable, but I say our own manufacture is good enough for me."

"It would be no trouble at all, I assure you," returned the persevering Mr. Mahon. "I shall be delighted to get them for you."

The lady looked still more stately, and said, as she bowed haughtily, "I thank you ; but it is not my wish to have any Miss St. Maur," she continued in the same lofty tone, "I am afraid you are in rather a perilous situation ; you had better change places with my son John. John, change with Miss St. Maur."

"Pardon me, I am too well satisfied with my present situation to wish to change it," said Helen quickly, indignant at the

lady's manner towards one, who, being poor, dependent, and withal very shy, felt every slight more deeply; and then turning in a kind manner to the blushing offender, she asked him to help her to some cream, gave him an invitation to dinner, and made a point of speaking to him several times during dinner.

"Just as you please, Miss St. Maur. I meant to do you a service. I say it is very disagreeable to have any thing thrown over one."

"Dear me! How very distressing the accident was," said Miss Carleton. "I hope you were not hurt! but you do look pale," addressing Mr. De Roos, whose meat she had insisted on cutting, and almost on putting into his mouth.

The gentleman answered the tender enquiry with all due gravity and gratitude, though it might have puzzled the most ingenious discoverer of things that are, or things that are not, to have found out any injury he could have sustained from such an accident, seated as he had been on the other side of the table.

"Mr. De Roos, let me help you to some cream. I have no idea of the quiet and gentlemanly being overlooked," said Mrs. Carleton, in her most condescending tone. "Some people say it should have three spoonsful of lemon juice; but I say that two are quite enough."

"Thank you, I will certainly try it, since you recommend it; but your daughter has taken such kind care of me, that I have had nothing to wish for."

"That woman, in her condescending moods, is like a turkey-cock dancing a jig; and in her haughty ones, like an ape attempting the sublime."

"Hush! hush! you are smarting from her *hauteur*, and have done quite enough mischief for one day."

"To be sure, things were carried a little further than I had intended; but it will be well if no more mischief be done by the name of Alford. Catherine looks suspicious."

"She does, and might personify the French colour of *une arraignée qui médite un crime*. I can only hope that her contempt may save us from a storm."

Nor was the hope vain; that lady contented herself with yawning visibly and audibly, refusing every thing offered, mistaking all that was said, and occasionally shutting her eyes.

An incongruous dessert succeeded to the incongruous dinner, and after Mrs. Carleton had required and received due praise

for the grapes, a pine and a melon, and had given the history of each separate article, the ladies retired to the drawing-room.

“ ‘A horse, a horse! my kingdom for a horse!’ ”

exclaimed Catherine, as she made Helen join her on the lawn. “Any thing to leave this den of *ennui*.”

“You shall have Mr. John Carleton’s horse Conqueror, which won at Newmarket. A monstrous fine animal I assure you!”

“You may laugh, but bring the idiot here at your peril. The fit is on me, and I shall certainly do some deadly mischief. How can you be so stupidly patient.”

“From the anticipation that I shall want allowances made for myself.”

“A delicate rebuke! But here comes the daughter, and I shall be bored to death with her interesting invalid. *Malade imaginaire*, I suspect,” and she walked towards the greenhouse.

“Mrs. Carlton is coming to shew the improvements,” said the laughing Helen, as that lady turned the corner with Mesdames Daniell and Mahon.

“This is too bad!” as Lord Somebody said. “Is there no place of safety?”

“Yes! the stable set a part for my horse Conqueror; there Mrs. Carleton dares not put a foot.”

“Helen, Helen, you are as bad as the rest; but save me from this infliction, and I will be civil to you for the next six months.”

“Then, of course, you join Captains Ross or Franklyn, else you promise what you will not perform. But follow where I lead for once, and we will see what can be done for you;” and, leading her back to the house another way, she showed her into a small apartment adjoining the drawing-room.

“Really, Helen, you have proved yourself a most charitable person; now, only keep the monsters away, and I will try to be civil after tea. Tell them I am mad, or dead, or any thing.”

“No one could doubt the truth of the former.”

“Caroline, my sweet love!” said her mother, “I cannot let you remain out any longer, you are so very delicate, and have coughed several times;” then, drawing her aside, she continued in a low tone, “I insist on your going in directly.”

The evening air will uncurl your hair, and make a fright of you ; and, remember, you do not sing till the gentlemen come in."

"How do your grapes get on?" asked Mrs. Daniell; "mine have been beautiful."

"Oh, yes! I dare say," replied her hostess, pompously. "I believe Mr. Daniell attends to them himself; but Mr. Carleton has so much business, for he is applied to from all parts of the county, that he has not time for those trifling things, and I find so much to do about the grounds, I cannot be every where. The gardener was very ignorant and very idle. I said I was sure he would not do, but Mr. Carleton would take him. I saw the grapes would come to nothing, and have had fresh vines put in, and shall have the house heated with hot water; but the premises are so large, I have not had time. There is that chimney, it smoked most dreadfully, and Mr. Carleton only said, it did very well when the wind was not westerly; but I said I did not see why it should smoke at all, so it is rebuilding on a plan of my own. The masons pretend not to understand it; but I say that is nothing to me, I want only tools. Then there is that stable, one used occasionally, when the other fifteen stalls are full. The wall was four inches out of level, yet Mr. Carleton talked of its standing for years, and wanted me to wait; but I said no, I cannot bear to see any thing wrong; but it is just like him, always wants me to wait. Then there is that great arbatus; I was obliged to move it when he was away, and change the shape of those beds. You see I have turned that path a little to the right. It is wonderful what a difference a few inches only will make with a little taste and trouble; but some people never attempt to improve!"

"I have such a horror of a litter that I never pull down if I can avoid it," replied Mrs. Daniell.

"Perhaps not; building is very expensive, and some people have no taste that way;" with a draw-up meant to intimate a thorough contempt for her guest's want of taste and inferior fortune.

"I could not live in such a constant bustle as you do; but I get on very well in my quiet way. Our grapes, though planted after yours, are very fine; and I will match the butter from our old dairy against any from your new one."

"No butter can be better than ours!" with a lofty air; "I will send you some to try, though I wonder any thing is well done with the servants one gets now-a-days. The house-

maid you recommended was so impertinent, I was obliged to send her away at a moment's warning ; she absolutely had the insolence to give me an answer ! and I understand she has said since she would not live with me for thirty pounds a year, for she was never out of a bustle. A pretty pass servants are come to, indeed ! want to sit in the drawing-room, with their hands before them, and do nothing. She wished for some chimney ornaments, and pictures or prints, for the housekeeper's room ; for it looked so bare. She was ashamed some of her fashionable friends should come into it. I say we bring most of these things upon ourselves, by not keeping up our own dignity."

"But if they are insolent to you, we can have no hope," said the lisping Mrs. Mahon, veiling the irony under the blandness of her tone.

"One cannot always be dignified," replied the flattered, with a condescending smile ; "one is obliged to relax sometimes. Would you believe it ? a young woman would not engage with me yesterday, because the prospect from the windows was so very confined ; and I hear she told the kitchen-maid she did not think the footman looked genteel."

This was one of the very few subjects on which all the three ladies agreed, and each seemed eager to contribute her quota to the abuse of modern servants.

"You know how small our fairy cottage is," said Mrs. Mahon, "and I had a cook who told me, after I thought she was engaged, that she deeply regretted being under the painful necessity of disappointing me, but that she made a point of keeping up her music, and that she found there was not space in the housekeeper's room for a piano ; besides, she had been in the habit of playing in concert, and she understood none of the servants round were musical."

"I hear," said Mrs. Daniell, "that Mrs. Denman's house-maid has just given her warning, alleging as a reason, that she finds no private dances are given among the servants in the neighbourhood, and that that is a thing to which she has been accustomed, and cannot do without, and I hear also one of her footmen is going, because she talks of not visiting town this year ; and he says if he should miss the season, he should lose footing, and be obliged to mix with the second class. It really is quite shocking ! This comes of education !"

"Education !" resumed Mrs. Mahon, "one of my children brought me by mistake a piece of paper which turned out to be a love-letter from the kitchen-maid, and this was it :—

‘Dearest and best-loved John,

‘How shall I support your absence? Your memory is with me in every occupation. To me you are like the great lamp in the hall, making it all light round you. You say you love me in every dress; but oh! how I wish you had seen me on Sunday, in an *estasy gros de Naps*, and a pink sasnet hat. The men said I was beautiful, and fit to be a queen; but I thought only of you. Farmer Hopkins gives a dance on Monday. Do you think it will be genteel? and will you meet me there? I practise walsing when I can wash the dishes in time. Come when you can, and write always.

‘Yours till death.

‘LOUISA MATILDA BROMFIELD.’

This comes of so many schools; they did well enough in former days, when they could neither read nor write.”

“I quite agree with you,” said Mrs. Carleton, “people talk to me about teaching the poor of Mansford, but I say no; if the girls are taught to work that is quite enough. What good will reading do them? They can go to church on the Sunday. One of my maids made her gown after Townshend, and I absolutely overheard Lady Catherine Alford’s London abigail talking over one of Scott’s novels, and saying she was quite in love with the hero; and my son John says farmer Hill’s daughter reads Lord Byron.* Such things are really shocking.”

“Shocking, indeed!” responded her auditors.

“I understand Miss St. Maur is the great person for schools. I hear she intends to enable every one in her village to learn to read!”

“So my daughter Harriet says, and I shall speak to her on the subject.”

“Miss St. Maur,” began her hostess, pompously, after seating herself with queen-like dignity, “you are very young, and I wish to warn you against the dangers of education. The more ignorant the poor are kept, the better servants they make; more humble and more obedient. In former days, the gentry were sure to meet with respect; now their inferiors are insolent enough to pretend to judge of the conduct of their superiors. These are fearful times, and we should all endeavour to keep down the rising spirit of rebellion;” and here she repeated some of the stories. “After hearing such things, I

* The authoress cannot claim the merit of invention for all these tales—most of them are facts.

am sure a young woman of your sense must see the propriety of discouraging schools, and only teaching the girls to work."

Helen laughed at these "tales of the times," to the great scandal of the three non-education ladies; and then, aware, from experience, of the impossibility of changing their opinions, preferred treating the matter playfully, rather than offend them by a grave argument.

"You know, Mrs. Carleton, young people are apt to be headstrong, and attend only to the teacher Experience; so I believe you must let me run my own course, and only laugh at my folly, when I own educating the poor is one of my hobbies."

"You may treat the subject lightly, Miss St. Maur; though I thought you possessed of more wisdom than to despise the advice of those older than yourself, and who have enquired into these things; but I warn you, so much education will ruin the country and destroy all subordination, for very soon none will choose to be servants."

"I am sorry such is your opinion; but, as I consider the enabling every one to read his Bible the duty of a Christian, I should be to blame not to promote that object as much as is in my power. When all can read, there will be no superiority on that score, and some must work, as in the days of ignorance; and, with all my admiration for antiquity and old customs, I neither wish nor can see how, in the present state of society, people can be estimated other than by character. No one worships the stars, though some do the sun. The rich man of former days, who ruled far and wide, has been replaced by many of moderate fortunes, and they must be content to have the respect divided in like proportion. With the present spirit of intelligence amongst the people, learn they would; and surely it is wiser, if the flood will come, to seek to direct its course, that it may fertilise the land, than enter on the hopeless task of endeavouring to check its course. Ignorance, if such could now be, leaves the people at the mercy of every temptation and every demagogue. By promoting religious instruction, we do the duty of Christians, and must humbly leave the event to a higher power. I have but one servant in my house who cannot read, and I doubt if there could be found any who do not feel a respectful attachment for me. I always take them from my own village, if I can, for the community of birthplace creates a sort of community of interest, and parents and children alike look upon me as a friend. I have known, amongst servants, such noble conduct

and disinterested attachment, as might shame the selfishness of many nobly born. I see you think me a wild enthusiast," she added, smiling, "so I shall run off before you can proclaim your opinion, and ask after Catherine's head."

"A very self-willed young lady, and inclined to lecture her elders. I understand she gives herself great airs, and is resolved to make a grand match. I was afraid my son John would have had her at one time, but he thought better of it. Such a daughter-in-law would never suit me; but young people are not what they used to be. I suppose I must go and see how Lady Catherine Alford is; they say she gives herself airs; very likely to others, but of course to me the thing is out of the question; she knows I should not submit to it. I hear she was very impertinent to you the other day, Mrs. Daniell."

"Not quite as much so as she was to you to-day," replied that lady, coolly; and her hostess, without making any remark, sailed out of the room.

"'Miss St. Maur her daughter-in-law!'" said Mrs. Daniell, bursting into a loud laugh; "and 'her son John thought better of it,' when all the world knows he was refused twice, and never had any encouragement. Poor woman! no wonder the servants won't stay with her; I have heard two or three declare they would rather break stones. Such a bustle!—she is never quiet—always wanting to improve, and makes things worse. Then she fancies all her works are superexcellent. Send me some butter, indeed! why, she scalds her cream, and never has a bit fit to eat. Lady Catherine impertinent to me, after her conduct to-day! That is a good one! Mrs. Carleton is, without exception, the most tiresome and disagreeable person I know."

"Oh! she has bored me to death," said Mrs. Mahon. "She can have no nerves. Such a dinner! I thought it meant for the farming men. Caroline, my dear," addressing her daughter, who entered the room with Miss Carleton; "come here, it looks interesting to sit at your mother's feet."

Helen was trying to persuade Catherine to be civil, when Mrs. Carleton's step was heard.

"Bolt the door, Helen, or I shall rave."

But the order was too late, and the hostess entered with increased grandeur, to awe the presumptuous Helen.

"I hope your Ladyship is better." Catherine had again sunk back with a sleepy air. "Miss St. Maur said you wished to be alone, or I should have come sooner."

"I am better, thank you," replied Catherine, languidly ; "a little more quiet will restore me quite."

The hint was not taken, and a chair was drawn beside the sofa, whilst Catherine turned such a ludicrous glance of horror on Helen, that she was obliged to turn away.

"If I could tell what occasioned your headache, I have no doubt I could cure it."

"Open the door, Helen, the room is too warm!" cried Catherine, taking no notice of Mrs. Carleton.

Helen opened the door, and entered the drawing-room as some of the gentlemen made their appearance.

"Perhaps it was waiting so long for Mr. De Roos?" continued the questioner; still no reply. "Let me feel your pulse; I shall be able to judge then. Some people talk of the smell of the dinner; but I never believe any thing of the sort; and as for *eau de Cologne* curing it, that is quite nonsense. I remember, when Lady Mary Santon was here, she had just such a head-ache, and some recommended one thing, and some another; but I said put your hands in warm water; she did so, and was cured directly."

"Prodigious!" exclaimed Lady Catherine, outdoing the Dominie himself, as she started from her seat, and approached the drawing-room.

But she was not to escape so easily. Mr. De Roos and Mr. John Carleton were standing in the doorway, and her ear caught the words "my horse Conqueror," whilst the violent rustling of a silk gown behind, gave warning of the approach of her pompous tormentor. The danger of retreat or advance seemed almost equal. She attempted to brush past Mr. John Carleton, whose back was towards her, but a part of her dress caught in the door, and detained her. Almost before she was aware of the accident, Mr. De Roos had stepped forward, disengaged her, and whispered in a low but gay voice, "Fear not! I will cover your retreat, and prevent pursuit."

For an instant she looked surprised and half offended at his perfect ease and confidence; then yielding to his elegance, prepossessing countenance, arch gaiety, and quick perception, she repeated, in a more playful tone, "Prodigious!" and, bowing her thanks, took advantage of his politeness to join the young ladies at the piano.

Carelessly linking his arm within that of the heir of Mansford, he drew him towards his mother, whose progress he dexterously stopped by a few magic words.

"I hear such wonders of your improvements, Mrs. Carleton, that if Colville Lodge were my own, I must entreat you to superintend some alterations. I understand a person who had known Mansford in former days, could hardly recognize it now."

The cloud passed from the lady's brow, and she was all condescension. After listening to her for some time with the most flattering attention, the gentleman left her, having won favour from mother and son.

"Mr. Carleton," he said, "will you permit me to accompany you to the next justice meeting? I may not again have such an opportunity of learning the duties of a magistrate. You know a seat on the bench does not always confer wisdom."

"No, indeed!" replied his gratified host, "as I find to my cost, when all my schemes are thwarted by ignorant coadjutors. I shall be delighted to take you, and will give you a few hints, which will enable you to understand the business," and he proceeded to favour his guest with something much more diffusive than hints.

With some difficulty, but great politeness, he at length extricated himself from the never-wearying talker, and bent for a moment over the still-reclining Mrs. Mahon.

"Do you still retain your kind interest in my wounded arm? It is only a scratch, but I have an aversion to surgeons, and feel all the delight of woman's sympathy, and the magic power of woman's nursing."

"I cannot tell you how you delight me: come early to-morrow; I pique myself on being sincere, and never saying any thing I do not mean."

"I shall not fail; but you will keep my secret, for I have a thorough English horror of becoming an object of attention."

The lady smiled her sweetest smile, and placed her finger on her lip, whilst the gentleman turned to Mr. Daniell.

"I have been thinking over what you said about the legality of that ejectment; but I doubt if I quite understood your last argument."

Mr. Daniell repeated it, with explanations and amplifications.

Mr. De Roos was silent for a moment, and looked in deep thought, then said abruptly, in the manner of one suddenly convinced, "I understand now! This comes of having things clearly explained. I see I must yield some of the headstrong judgments of youth to the wisdom of others;" and he turned to Lord Marston, who had just joined them.

"What do you think, my lord, of the coalition talked of between the R. and the M. parties? I know such things are often nothing but reports of the ignorant; but I am so well aware of your lordship's quick perception of character and intimate acquaintance with all the political combinations of the day, that your opinion would be decisive."

"There are some things which should not be spoken of lightly, even to the most discreet, particularly by those who may be supposed to understand a little about these matters; but with the slight knowledge I possess, I should suppose and imagine—nay, I should think, there was every probability of such a thing being possible."

"I understand you my lord, and of course doubt no longer; whilst his lordship looked half terrified at having been flattered into any thing so decisive; but it was too late to retract.

"Mrs. Daniell, I hear your abode is the very home of comfort; no ungravelled walks; no bustle; no litter; flowers allowed time to grow, and guests to be quiet. I must persuade you to pity my forlorn condition, and help me to arrange my household at Colville. Mr. Mahon, you will remember your kind promise about the coachmaker?" and before he could receive an answer he had joined the group at the piano.

"I am sure you sing, Mr. De Roos!" exclaimed Miss Carleton.

Mr. De Roos did sing—sing well, too—and without any of the farce of denial, or the trouble of pressing. He sang an Italian duet with Miss Carleton; and then, at her command, an Irish melody. It was impossible not to be pleased with his singing, and more than a silent admiration was bestowed on his performance. Even Lady Catherine showed him favour, allowed him to join Helen and herself in the Gipsies' Chorus, and afterwards sang a duet with him, as the reward he playfully claimed for having been her protector. Helen alone said nothing in praise of his voice; but, passionately fond as she was of music, her silence said more than the words of others. She had for some time stood rather apart from the rest, and Mr. De Roos had the vanity or the penetration to fancy he had obtained a great share of her observation. Totally free from all wish for display, and perfectly aware that neither Catherine or Miss Carleton would regret her refusal, she had declined singing unless absolutely wanted; yet was her voice superior to any there, and the stranger doubted it not, from the part she had taken in the trio.

There were, who thought Lady Catherine had been taught

too much; whilst Miss Carleton was not always particular as to time or tune; and Miss Mahon wanted power, though she was a sweet and pleasing singer. Song succeeded song, generally duets, in which the stranger bore a part, and still Helen sat with her face half hid, revelling in the luxury of sweet sounds.

"Will not Miss St. Maur sing?" at length asked Mr. De Roos, in a rather earnest, but most respectful tone.

"Not to-night," she said, looking up with a smile, though the tears still glistened in her eyes, for he had just been singing that most affecting of all affecting things, the "Captive Knight;" and so feelingly had he sung it, that she had felt all the blighted hope, the desolation and despair of the poor prisoner; and had none else been nigh, would have sobbed outright.

"Oh! but you must," said Alford, who always interfered if he thought her slighted; "we must have a duet. No one ever admires my voice but when I sing with you."

To oppose him, without some good reason, she knew of old to be hopeless, and rose to comply.

"Do pray sing that funny thing about teaching a foreigner to read—it just suits your voice," said Miss Carleton, placing the song before her. "Poor thing! she has had the best masters, but her voice is nothing in Italian music."

Helen heard the whispered remark, and an arch smile, as she looked up and met Mr. De Roos's glance, showed that she did so. He would have proposed some other song, but before he could speak she had begun, and none could fail to admire the playfulness and point with which it was sung. She would have risen at its conclusion, but Alford insisted on her singing "The harp that once through Tara's halls."

"There are some things one dares not praise!" said Mr. De Roos, in a low voice, as he stepped aside to allow her to pass.

Helen took no notice, but immediately asked Miss Carleton for a song admirably calculated to show off her voice to the best advantage. Whilst the song was singing, Mr. De Roos conversed with Alford. "I cannot tell you how I regret not having known your family before; for in my childish days, ere I lost a beloved mother, I used often to hear Lady Marston quoted as all that woman should be, and it has long been my wish to be thought worthy of her son's friendship. Moralists say no sentiment in the human heart is quite pure, and to-night I have learnt to envy you your influence over Miss

St. Maur, who appears to be one of those beings one pictures to oneself in boyhood, and wastes manhood in seeking in vain. I dare scarcely, on the introduction of a Mrs. Carleton, presume to consider myself as even a common acquaintance."

"You do but justice to my mother and Helen," replied the warm-hearted Alford, completely won by this praise of the two persons he loved most on earth. "I must introduce you to both. Helen, Mr. De Roos is so fearful that the introduction of the pompous Mrs. Carleton might make him odious in your sight, that I have consented to play Mr. C., and make him known to you as an admirer of excellence."

Helen blushed slightly as she returned the respectful bow of the introduced; a blush of which Mr. De Roos formed his own opinion.

"Being a stranger, Miss St. Maur, I took the liberty of riding through a part of Hurlestone a day or two since, and now tell of my presumption, lest you should hear of it from less friendly lips. I was assured, by more than one, that its mistress was too liberal to bar its beauties from a stranger; and as I rode through your superb woods, I could not but call to mind the heroes the noble race of St. Maur had produced. As I passed through the village, with its neat school and comfortable cottages, and listened to the prayers and blessings that hallowed your name, I understood all the luxury of doing good, and why you mingle not with the great world. Surely one may be forgiven envying you!"

Helen absolutely started. She had watched him adapt himself to the foibles of others; but, with the weakness of human nature, she thought not her own would be propitiated, and that so boldly. She turned on him a penetrating look, yet nothing was to be seen but the open expression of warm, yet respectful admiration. She paused for a moment, and then her part was taken.

"You are a fearful personage, Mr. De Roos. There is no weakness, no secret, but you can lay it bare at a touch." She fancied there was a slight, a very slight change of countenance, but the next instant thought herself mistaken, and continued: "It would be wiser in all who wish hidden things to be unrevealed, to keep beyond the power of your spells; and yet, I suppose, I must yield to the charm to which others have yielded, and as a reward for reading me this lesson on the heart's hidden vanity, or for your admiration of my ancestors and flattery of myself, invite you to Hurlestone on Thursday next."

Miss Carleton called him away at the moment, and he could only bow his thanks and look his pleasure.

"On? Miss St. Maur," said Mr. Carleton, "I am come to you for a little quiet. What it is to be a talker? I am tired to death. Let Mr. Daniell once begin, and there is no hope of a conclusion, or putting in a word. His school-fellows gave him the name of 'Jaw-me-dead;' but one would have thought as he advanced in years he would have seen the propriety of being more silent; but some people are quite blind to their own faults!" And on moralized Mr. Carleton for full five minutes, without a stop, on the impropriety committed by his brother magistrate in talking so much, till fortunately, as Helen thought, a summons from his wife released her from the torrent of words. There is a common saying, "Out of the frying-pan into the fire;" and our heroine was doomed to exemplify its truth, for before she could rise Mr. Daniell had taken the vacant seat beside her. "I congratulate you on the summons that called Mr. Carleton away, and saved you from a deluge of speech. A full spring-tide is nothing to the overwhelming force of his words. A French school-fellow gave him the *soubriquet* of '*Parle ton.*' It really is quite melancholy to see a man of his age and sense, so blind to his foible! I cannot understand how a person can talk so incessantly without being weary." And on moralized Mr. Daniell, as Mr. Carleton had done before.

"What makes you look so grave, *ma belle*?" said Alford, approaching her soon after.

"I am moralizing, as two have done before me, on what a strange being man is; a mole to his own foibles, a hawk to the foibles of others."

"A truce to moralizing," said Catherine, "and tell us what you think of this *malade intéressant*."

"*Malade imaginaire*, you mean," replied Helen archly. "I think he deals in magic, and that we owe him much for having thrown his glamour over you, and caused you to be civil for one hour out of the five you have spent at Mansford. To secure the performance of your six month's civility, I have engaged him to meet you on Thursday."

"Indeed! you amaze me. I should not have suspected you of such an unadvised act, after so short an acquaintance; but of course it was solely on my account."

"Of course."

"What do you think of this stranger, Alford?" asked Helen, as his sister left them.

"I think him still a little bit of a coxcomb, but very pleasant and elegant."

"A coxcomb! a magician rather! A very awful personage!

'An awful man John Todd! John Todd!

An awful man was he!"

You may laugh now, but you may feel the truth hereafter."

"Why, he scarcely said anything till he entered the drawing-room; so taken up was he with his own elegant figure and wounded arm."

"He has said enough since, and, if lips were silent, I am much mistaken if eyes and ears were not the more active. He has every sense double; can see, without looking; hear, without listening; speak, without being heard; and shows us our foibles as the means through which he wins us. We may deceive ourselves; but we shall scarcely deceive him."

"Hey-day, Helen! whence all this eloquence and penetration? and why seek the acquaintance of such a dangerous person?"

"His character interests me as uncommon, and with the daring of youth, I despise the danger."

"His character interests you! Ha! ha! ha! So it does Miss Carleton."

"*Plus on est fou, plus on rit.*"

"Thanks! Develop his character as you please, you will find him neither more nor less than an agreeable coxcomb."

"Out upon you for a poor blind mole! But remember you must behave with due decorum on Thursday. I cannot have my guests put to confusion for your misdeeds."

"Cruel creature! I have promised my shy neighbour one day of fishing, and one of shooting; have consoled with Mrs. Mahon, and intend to give Mrs. Carleton—no, I will give her nothing, for she does not deserve it."

CHAPTER XIV.

Après l'esprit de discernement, ce qu'il-y-a au monde de plus rare, sont les diamans et les perles.

Il-y-a de petites règles, des devoirs, des bienséances attachées aux tems, aux personnes, qui ne se devinent point à force d'esprit, et que l'usage apprend sans nulle peine; juger des hommes par les fautes qui leur échappent en ce genre, avant qu'ils soient assez, c'est en juger par leurs règles, ou par la pointe de leurs cheveux, c'est vouloir un jour être detrompé.

LA BRUYERE.

"Do not stay here with me, my sweet love," said Mrs. Mahon to her daughter, "but go and entertain Miss St. Maur, who is looking for you."

"I suspect she is much more agreeably employed, and I have no wish to play Madame de Trop," replied Caroline in a whisper, looking to where Helen and Mr. De Roos were standing apart, engaged in an earnest and animated conversation.

"Nonsense! he has not known her more than three weeks, and I see nothing particular in his attentions."

"True! but some secret sympathy, or something less romantic, has taught him to cross her path almost every day during that period; and there is too much congeniality between them, to allow them to meet so often with indifference."

"Folly! Join the party directly, or I shall;" then turning to a sheepish-looking young man of good fortune, who approached at the instant, she resumed in a moment her caressing tone. "My dear Caroline is such an affectionate child, I cannot persuade her to quit my side. I don't know how I shall ever part with her; and yet, with her sweet disposition and talents, I can scarcely hope to keep her always with me. But there are so few worthy of her, I don't mean as to fortune, for I think less of that than most mothers—but as to better things. How I wish more of our young men resembled you!"

The sheepish-looking young man looked more sheepish still, and the mother congratulated herself, and not without reason, on having almost secured a *dernier resort*.

Meanwhile the daughter, with a lagging step, and a blush for her mother, proceeded to disturb the *tête-à-tête*. On the day, before Mrs. Mahon had given her first dinner to the heiress, and had, as was her wont, furnished house-room for some of the likely young men, rightly judging that the socia-

ble morning's meal brought more of intimacy, and perhaps a warmer feeling, than the crowded and sometimes formal dinner. The road from Hurlestone to Bensted being dangerous at night, from a bank having given way, she had been obliged to include Helen among the "Seven Sleepers."

The windows had been thrown open on account of the heat, and after breakfast, the party had dispersed in groups on the lawn, or in the drawing-room, as fancy directed. As Miss Mahon approached, she found that however earnest might have appeared the conversation between our heroine and Mr. De Roos, it was on no weightier subject than some of the popular works of the day, and the ready manner in which Helen appealed to her as she came up, showed that one at least felt no vexation at her presence. The conversation was continued; and, by degrees, nearly the whole party collected on the same spot.

"Who is that coming down the hill?" asked one.

"The postman!" replied another.

"The postman! the postman!" and all moved towards the gate, though none perhaps anticipated letters of any importance.

I know not what others may do, but I love a letter above most things. A delightful long letter! the three pages, the ends, and round the seal written and re-written; the words formed by a flowing pen, and the sense dictated by a loving and eloquent heart; in short, such a letter as ladies love and gentlemen ridicule; and for such letters I have watched and listened as eagerly, and as breathlessly, as can the sick for the step of the coming leech. Thus am I waiting and listening even now, and yet to me will come nothing that can bring hope or pleasure. Perhaps it was the same feeling of vague expectation, which induced all to move in the same direction. The man was employed by several families, and thus Helen was almost the only one who could receive no letter, yet she joined the group round the gate; and, in answer to some remark from Mr. De Roos, hoped he would hear his father was better.

"I thank you!" he replied, much gratified by the kind tone in which the wish had been conveyed. "If not, I shall go to him immediately; you know what it is to lose a parent, and I have but one left."

He turned aside as he spoke, the tears came into Helen's eyes, and a fresh subject for sympathy seemed awakened.

The bags were delivered, the letters taken out, and there

was one for Mr. De Roos from his father. Helen's eyes were almost unconsciously fixed on his face, as he tore it open, and glanced at its contents. The first few lines seem to give him pleasure, then a change came over his features, and the letter was slightly crushed with a sudden and impatient movement. Helen failed not to remark the change, but without a clue to guide her to the contents of that letter, her curiosity, though strongly awakened, must remain unsatisfied. That they were not pleasurable was certain. At that instant he looked up, their eyes met, and aware he had been observed, he coloured slightly and half turned away.

"I hope your father is better."

"Thank you! yes—no—yes," stammered out the gentleman, for the first time since she had known him confused and almost awkward. This confusion lasted but for a moment, her look of wonder recalled his scattered senses, his self-possession returned, and he was again the bland, the collected, and the winning.

"I am happy to say my father is much better; but I was so absorbed in my letter, I believe I should apologize for my distant mode of answering."

"I too should apologize for having disturbed you, but I feared your father was worse."

She was bending over a flower bed, either admiring its beauties, or trying to account for the change of manner in Mr. De Roos, for she did not like to feel herself baffled, when the subject of her thoughts gained her side.

"What a beautiful gum cistus!" he said, pointing to one just coming into bloom, "and what a lovely flower it is, so delicate, so fragile. It is like one of the bright dreams of our youth, fading almost before we feel its beauty; its most appropriate epitaph a sigh. Or like the hope of the morning, gone ere the evening hour."

She looked up in surprise, but the pensive smile, and the half-veiled eye, accorded well with the melancholy sentiment.

"Have you penetrated my taste for the romantic, and thus covertly ridicule it; or can it be, that the gay, the envied, the animated, 'the favourite of fortune,' as he is styled by some, bears a canker in his heart, blighting the fairest flowers of life?"

"There are few roses without thorns, and where is the heart that hides not some sorrow in its secret depths."

There was something very touching in his tone, and flattering in this confidence. Helen felt it, but answered gaily:

"The roses with thorns are most beautiful of their species ; and for the secret depths of the human heart, I trust yours are not so profound as to be beyond the leech's fathom line to reach, or its sorrows beyond his skill to cure."

"I suppose I must own," he replied smiling, "that I spoke at the moment more as a poet than as one who confines himself to strict matter of fact, and were I to tell the cause of my present discomfiture, I fear I should meet with but little sympathy."

"Pray do not keep me in suspense, for I am what you gentlemen would call a thorough woman, all sympathy and curiosity ; and 'since trifles make the sum of human life,' why may I not condole with you on the death of a favourite hunter, or the bursting of a famous gun—two of the heaviest misfortunes, as I have been told, which can befall a man between the ages of eighteen and forty-five."

"You are laughing at me, Miss St. Maur, and I cannot bear your ridicule."

"Nay, I am gravity itself ; and it is quite impossible that the Hon. Mr. De Roos should shrink from ridicule !"

"Not quite as impossible as you imagine, and though others might deem the cause of my discomfiture one of those trifles that make the sum of human life, it is no trifle to me, since it will deprive me of the pleasure of dining with you to-morrow."

"Indeed !" she replied, blushing against her inclination at the regret implied and looked.

"Well, I shall not distress your modesty by saying how much my guests and myself shall lament your absence, but rather try to overcome the obstacle. You are so perfect in the art of putting all in good-humour, that you are an invaluable acquisition, though I doubt if your talents would be rewarded with the like success, were you to attempt to amend our morals instead of our manners."

"Surely you do not deem me a flatterer, who would outrage truth for the paltry purpose of winning common applause."

"No ; only as one who would avail himself of the foibles of mankind for amusement or profit."

"Your manner is playful, but your words, if in earnest, are keen ; I had hoped you at least understood me."

"Did you hope so ?" replied Helen quickly, with one of those sudden impulses that people of lightning perceptions cannot always control, and her eyes were again fixed on his face. Once more she thought she perceived confusion as he

turned away, but it might be only surprise at her abruptness, or wounded feeling at the doubt it implied. There was a silence, and when he again spoke it was in sadness.

"Said I not truly, the hope of the morning fled ere the evening hour? Some few minutes since, and I flattered myself with the idea of possessing a portion of the esteem of Miss St. Maur, and now I feel she considers me as a heartless deceiver. I cannot stoop to defend myself even if defence would avail me, and can but hope time will prove me what I wish Miss St. Maur to think me."

The melancholy tone, so full of respect, even at the time it showed how much he was hurt, touched her, and she hastened, with all her natural frankness and kindness, to heal the wound she had unintentionally inflicted.

"An heiress is too petted a creature often to hear the truth, and I fear my friends have indulged my playful mood, till it sometimes caracoles without due control, and wounds in sport, without the slightest intention of so doing. I assure you, I have not yet decided you to be any thing so horrible as a heartless deceiver; on the contrary, I feel I have not yet fathomed those secret depths of which you spoke, and will willingly believe in the value of their hidden pearls. If my words conveyed a doubt of your sincerity, it must have been from a recollection of one of the lessons of my childhood, to distrust all that looked most pleasurable. And now, can you forgive me? or will you leave me to entertain my guests as I best can?"

St. Sesanus himself would have been subdued; whilst, even in her gayest moods, there was a *retenue* in her manner, that effectually repressed every approach to freedom.

"It is I should ask forgiveness, since I fear I was pettishly offended for nothing." He took her hand as he spoke, but allowed her to withdraw it instantly. "There are few who might not dread your penetration, yet must I challenge it. Rather would I forfeit your esteem for ever, than win it by appearing other than I am."

"You have at least won my thanks at present, and of course, since you challenge my penetration, you can have no cause to dread it. I fear you will find my party tiresome."

"You forget the obstacle still exists?"

"I thought we had decided on overcoming it. What is it?"

"The presence of one whom I am little inclined to introduce at Hurlestone, as his manners and appearance would subject him to ridicule; and, do not blame my weakness too harshly,

if I own I could ill brook, as his companion, becoming the object of merriment to you."

"I certainly cannot comprehend such a feeling in Mr. De Roos, but we must not discuss character again. Tell me all about this *outré* being, and if you would not scruple to introduce him to a sister, bring him to Hurlestone. Under our patronage any thing short of an ourang-outang will be treated with all due distinction."

"A thousand thanks for thus kindly undertaking the office of showman," whilst his looks conveyed, as he intended, warmer thanks than his laughing speech. "This horrific personage was left to my father's care by my late uncle, and we have been exerting our influence to procure him a cadetship, but hitherto in vain. The young man knows nothing of his birth, and my uncle never mentioned him till on his death-bed : too late to learn particulars. He was brought up by some obscure person in the north, and has come to town to try what he can get, I believe. My father's health being delicate, he has sent him down to me to keep him out of mischief, and he is to arrive to-day."

"Then you have not seen him, and do not know he is so very *outré*."

"My father gives a strange account of his *gaucheries*, and since it is but fair that you should know all, hints at some brawl in a gaming-house. I have but little inclination to become the keeper of this 'northern bear.'"

"It is not the station your friends would assign you, certainly ; but is he too old to learn, and what is his name ?"

"His name is Elliot ; but I suspect, though not more than three-and-twenty, he is too self-willed to allow a hope of amendment."

"This is nothing very promising, but as you have not seen him, he may turn out better than you expect, and we may make some allowances."

"But unfortunately I have seen him. We met as I was wandering in the north, and I had more to endure from his insolence than I could well brook, though, as an inferior and one to be pitied, I curbed my temper. Indeed, once he nearly lost me my life, by pushing me into the water ; but I wish none of this to be remembered against him, and know you will not repeat it. We were but young then, and, as you so kindly say, some allowances should be made. He was then a long lank awkward youth, with broad accent, and my present

account is scarcely more favourable ; so I fear you will withdraw your kind invitation."

"No ; for the sake of his delicate situation and renowned border name, to say nothing of our pleasure in your society, he shall receive an invitation to-morrow. If we keep his secret and pay him attention, others will follow our example, and Miss Jones will take him for a resuscitated border chief."

"How shall I thank you?"

"By keeping my company in good humour."

Most men would have been flattered by Helen's conduct, but Mr. De Roos, it is thought, did not review it with any great satisfaction.

The morrow came, and the guests began to arrive. There were the Mahons, and the Carletons, and the Daniells, and the Joneses, and some others not worth the trouble of introducing to our readers. It was what Alford called one of her civil dinners, when she entertained folly and stupidity by wholesale ; yet had he kindly offered to play the host, an offer gladly accepted.

Though she neither paid compliments or made pretty speeches, she was polite and attentive to all ; and if some of her neighbours complained that they could not get intimate with her, none had any cause to blame her for slight or rudeness. Without flattering a foible, or encouraging a fault, she always conversed on a subject agreeable to her visitors, and even Mrs. Carleton found no great cause for complaint. Though penetrating, she was not sarcastic ; and ever preferred eulogy to censure. As a hostess she was inimitable, and that awful thing, a formal circle with ladies on one side and gentlemen on the other, was never seen at Hurlestone ; and a yawn, except among the ultra stupid, was almost as rare. Her's was a kindness of heart, not mere politeness of manner ; for to the keen perceptions of a Chesterfield, she united the love, the sincerity, and the benevolence of a Christian. Such characters can alone be truly polite.

By some strange chance Mr. De Roos was again the last of the guests, and again the smoking horses seemed to intimate the delay was occasioned by no wish of that gentleman.

"Again the last ! that his entrance may make a sensation," said Alford, in a low voice. "What say you of your hero now ? A coxcomb, or not a coxcomb ? that is the question."

"Most decidedly not, though by no means ignorant of the inimitable grace with which he enters a room. But pray don't

call him my hero ; and remember your promise to be civil to his companion."

"Never fear ! you shall see how good I can be ; though it is rather cruel not to let me laugh a little. But your conduct to this newly-risen star, as Miss Jones calls him, is beyond my comprehension ; you think too much of him."

"And you too little. To play oracle, he is much better or much worse than you deem him."

"You certainly write in Moore's Almanack—'rain about this time; the day before or the day after.' You are blinded by his manners ; there is nothing out of the common in his mind."

"*Nous verrons*. Here they come."

Those who were at the window might have remarked that Mr. De Roos was looking from the carriage with the eagerness and animation of anticipated pleasure, perhaps triumph, and the elegant and assured air of one accustomed to win favour ; whilst his companion was leaning back, like one who would fain shun observation.

Few things could have furnished a greater contrast than the two persons who entered the room together. Mr. De Roos has been already described ; with his slight and elegant figure, scarcely above the middle size, pleasing and handsome features, and fascinating manners, he seemed the very epitome of grace. As he paid his compliments to Helen, with the most animated looks, he glanced slightly at his companion before he introduced him, as if to remind her of her promise, whilst a smile seemed to intimate that that promise had furnished one link of the chain which he sought to cast around her. Even Helen half started as the introduction took place, and Miss Carleton laughed aloud.

The stranger was about six feet three, thin, and ungainly to a high degree ; a little lame, with a sickly complexion ; a large black patch over one temple, and ill-arranged shaggy black hair, which reached almost to his eyebrows, and gave him a sinister look. Without being absolutely ill-dressed, his clothes wanted an air, and any slight awkwardness of manner that might have passed unnoticed in another, was rendered doubly conspicuous by his ungainly figure. As Helen looked on her two visitors, she forgave the smile of self-gratulation she perceived, or fancied she perceived, on the lip of one. Not that the stranger looked sheepish or shy : on the contrary, his manner was rather stern and proud. There was

no stooping, no shuffling, no shrinking, but his figure was drawn up to its greatest height, and all thought the Irish giant must vail to him in stature; whilst his step, as far as his lameness would permit, was a strong and manly stride, rather than the delicate tread fit for a lady's drawing-room.

As Miss Carleton's laugh and expression of disgust met his ear, and as Mr. De Roos introduced him in a tone, just so little patronising as to be marked only by a sensitive ear, his step became still more proud, his look still more stern; but as he met Helen's kindly smile, which showed sympathy, not patronage—for she too had heard the laugh—his stern and his pride half passed away; and as he listened to her soft voice giving him welcome, and gazed on the brightness of her beauty, the feeling with which he had entered the room seemed completely changed, and he looked awkward and confused. The change was not unobserved by Helen, who felt it as the greatest involuntary flattery she had ever received; and we will not say, this conviction—for who has no vanity to propitiate?—might not have had some influence on her future conduct.

After expressing her pleasure at his presence, in terms which, as they were dictated by feeling, were neither too high nor too low, she conversed with him for a few moments on subjects which scarcely required more than acquiescence; and then perceiving that the eyes of all were on them, she asked if he were fond of flowers; owned the conservatory was one of her passions; then calling on Alford to assist her in doing its honours, introduced him at the same time as one who, known from childhood, had kindly offered to play the host. As they passed through the drawing-room, and she stopped to converse for a moment with some of the different groups, she made a point of introducing Mr. Elliott, and her marked attention won him civility from all. Before the drawing-room was deserted, the uncouth looking stranger had shared in an animated conversation with Helen and Alford, and though his appearance made it almost a mockery to talk of elegance, and a tincture of reserve rendered him the antipodes of his fair companion in manner, still nothing about him indicated a mean or grovelling mind. Though etiquette forbade his sitting next Helen, she showed him much attention, and had procured him Miss Mahon as a neighbour; so not relapsing, save once, into his first stern mood, some of the ladies pronounced him to be a very ill-looking, stupidly polite

sort of personage, but Miss Carleton still openly avowed her detestation and horror, "wondering how Mr. De Roos could take such an ugly bear about with him."

"Did you favour Mr. De Roos with your opinion of his friend?" inquired our heroine.

"To be sure. But pray do not call him his friend!"

"What did he say? And why may I not call him his friend?"

"He said I was very severe, and ought to pity him, as you did, for he was a dependant on Lord Fitzallan; and I am sure he is no friend of his. So I shall laugh at him as much as I please."

"I thought as much!" was Helen's sudden exclamation. She then mildly stated to the young lady the want of feeling her conduct indicated; and finding the remonstrance of no avail, declared plainly that no guest should be insulted a second time by the same person in her house.

Miss Carleton pouted and flounced; but the heiress of Hurlestone was not a person to be quarrelled with, so she indemnified herself with the determination of annoying him trebly in every other house in which she might chance to meet him.

Leaving Mrs. Hargrave to entertain the elders, Helen joined the young ladies in a stroll. Their white dresses, floating amongst the trees, were visible from the dining-room, and Alford, who ever acted as a privileged person, sprang out of the window, followed by Messieurs De Roos and Elliott, and joined the walking party.

"Of course we are very glad to see you," said the laughing Helen; "but what will become of my guests, since the deputy host has deserted."

"Oh, the deputy's deputy will do very well. I have appointed Carleton president, and Mahon croupier, and we left them discussing warrants and mittimusess, black cattle and American blight."

Miss Carleton soon turned into a narrow path, only wide enough for two, and then remarking three diverging from the same spot, all terminating in a grotto, insisted on betting with Alford as to which was the longest, to be decided by their party dividing into three portions, each taking a different path; then, having arranged every thing to her own satisfaction, without a thought as to the dissatisfaction of others, she put her arm within that of Mr. De Roos, and thus compelled him to accompany her, calling on Alford at the same time to take

another path. After a laugh at the manœuvre, he prevailed on Miss Jones to accept his escort, and left Helen, Miss Mahon, and Mr. Elliott together.

That gentleman seemed quite another person when left with those two fair and kindly beings. In a short time his reserve had vanished. The face, lit up as some few faces, and only some few, can; and as he talked of the old border tales, and the beauties of his native country, or gazed on the lovely scenery around, and listened to the noble deeds of Helen's ancestors, which Miss Mahon found pleasure in relating, the occasional flashing of his dark eye was as the lighting through the midnight gloom. Once, when the flashing had passed, a sigh succeeded, and a deeper gloom came over his brow. His eyes sought the ground, then on a sudden he looked up and said, in a melancholy tone—

"You are happy, Miss St. Maur, for you have the memory of the past to live upon. You may dwell on the noble deeds of your fathers, and feel they need not blush for their descendant. But for me! I have no past; and the present and the future, what will they be? If I win a name, none will smile—if I win a grave, none will weep."

Helen was surprised; and the tears stood in her dark eyes as she heard his melancholy words and met his melancholy look.

"Say not so," she said, smiling on him through her tears. "I will predict a brighter fate: A name ennobled by high virtues, if not by gallant deeds, with kind and loving friends."

"Do you predict this?" and the flush of excited hope for a moment glowed on his manly cheek, and then faded away as suddenly as it had come. "No, lady, no! The poor, and the nameless, and the friendless, must only hope an honourable death, and even that they may not win."

"Doubt not my powers of prophecy. Few can be heroes in these dull times; but the noble mind, if its trust be placed aright, shall master an untoward fate."

We have already owned she was an enthusiast, and even the most dull could not have looked on her at that moment, without being inspired by her own bright hopes.

But Mr. Elliott was not dull, and no weak despondent, though the evil fortunes of his youth, his isolated state, and a severe illness, had somewhat lowered his naturally buoyant spirit. He too was an enthusiast. What wonder, then, if his youthful hopes won brightness from her inspiration; or that he should reply with flashing eye and glowing cheek?

"I will believe you, lady, and if the hope prove vain, it shall perish only in the grave; your words, your kindness, shall lighten the gloom of an adverse fate. Think me not a weak and indolent complainer, though a fancied resemblance to the home of my childhood roused for a time the passion of feeling. I will bear my own sorrows as I must, and clear my own path. A month's residence in the great world has shown me that to ask for pity is to meet contempt; but, since you have predicted a brighter lot, I will not prove unworthy of your interest."

Miss Mahon, who had lingered behind to gather a flower, rejoined them at the moment, and as both felt too much to wish to say more, the conversation dropped, and Mr. Elliott turned into another path.

"I have persuaded *la belle Susanne*," said Alford, coming up to Helen, "that your northern bear is descended from the ancient kings of Northumberland, who crossed the borders one day by mistake,—and related to all the renowned reivers of that name; so expect an exquisite scene the first moment she can get up a sentimental conversation."

"Oh, Alford! how can you be so thoughtless?" replied Helen, convinced that a discussion on the stranger's pedigree would be any thing rather than pleasing; but Alford had left her, without giving her time to reprove, and before she could follow to have the mischief repaired, Mr. De Roos had joined her.

"I have been long seeking to thank you for your kindness, in patronizing my awkward visitor. I am ashamed to say with what horror I shrank from introducing him to you, or how much I was provoked when his delay obliged us to enter a crowded room. For some freak or other, even at the last moment, he doubted about coming, and said something about being thought a fortune-hunter. Poor young man! it is really a sad thing to see how blind he is to his own deficiencies. When I saw your look as you first beheld him, I felt ashamed of my selfishness in having brought him, and then the dignity and kindness with which you received him, checking the impertinence of others, showed me my own littleness in shrinking from the association. I do not know whether to feel most humbled or gratified at your angelic conduct."

"It is not for me to determine on which side the balance should descend," replied Helen with a penetrating look, for she had formed her own estimate of the matter.

"I see you highly disapprove of my weakness in fearing ridicule."

"On the contrary, I should not have been aware of the weakness had you not disclosed it; and, entertaining it, I am sorry to inform you that Mr. Elliott's dependent situation is known to more than one mean mind among my guests. Had he been known only as your visitor, he would have been sufficiently courted."

The gentleman looked much annoyed, but what he said, after a moment's consideration, might account for this.

"I am indeed vexed to hear this; the more so, as I fear it has been occasioned by my own inadvertence, and want of self-possession. Miss Carleton asked so many teasing questions, that, unpractised in every species of deception, I found I had unconsciously admitted more than I had intended; and, then entangled by my own frankness, as a last resource, I endeavoured to engage her pity and silence, and foolishly flattered myself I had succeeded. I see you are surprised at my deficiency in parrying troublesome questions, but I fear I shall never make a courtier."

"Surprise is not the word; I am absolutely amazed to find Miss Carleton had the power of baffling you."

"I am afraid you give me credit for powers of dissimulation which I do not possess?"

"Do I?" she said, half carelessly half pointedly, and turned away, leaving the gentleman to answer Mr. Mahon, who spoke to him at the instant with smiles and courtesy.

As Helen entered the drawing-room, she heard the soft tones of the sentimental Miss Jones addressing Mr. Elliott in words which proved that Alford's account had not been exaggerated.

"How delightful it must be to be descended from the ancient monarchs of the north, and to live on the extatic reminiscences of the noble and the brave! How I envy you the rapturous privilege! Have you no chronicle of the deeds of your house, full of chivalric and romantic border tales? I dote on such things; they fling the stupid common-places of the present into shadow, and shed the glowing light of genius and chivalry on the heroic deeds of the past. One of these old legends is like the lightning gleaming on an ancient ruin. I can see your's is a congenial spirit, and that your heart swells well nigh to bursting its narrow bounds, at the tales of the deeds of other times, when your ancestors passed forth to the glorious fray, in all the pomp and pride and circumstance of war!"

"To harry the defenceless, and carry off, by force or guile, other mens' goods," added the laughing Alford, who was in full readiness to enjoy the scene.

"Come from the north! did you say, with a pedigree as long as a purser's story?" inquired Mr. Mahon. "Let me see! I knew two families of the name. Those at H. were descended from an ancient race, and could trace up to the creation—some thought beyond. There were two brothers, fine young men, I hear, though I never saw them since they were children; perhaps you are one?"

Mr. Elliott, who, from the *naiserie* of Miss Jones, and the smiles of those around, considered these questions as meant for insults, answered proudly and coldly, "I have not the honour to be either of these fine young men, or in any way related to them."

"Oh! then it must be the Elliotts of P." continued Mr. Mahon, nothing daunted by his manner. "There were Willie and Hobbie, descended from the last reiver, who was hanged at Westburn Flat, or some such thing. One was handsome and silly, and the other could have wiled off a crow's foot: pleasant men, both! By the way, I promised to send Willie Elliott a pointer, and this will be a good opportunity; you can take it up when you return."

"I have no intention of returning for some time," replied Mr. Elliott still more coldly.

"Not return for some time! Why, what will your mother say? For I am sure you are a son of my friend Willie's, by the likeness."

"I have no mother," he said more sternly, still attempting to escape; but Mr. Mahon had laid hold of his button.

"No mother! poor thing! dead then? You must tell me all about it."

"I am not related to the Elliotts of P."

"Not related to the Elliotts of P.!" continued his tormentor. "Then to what family do you belong? Now I recollect, one branch lived at Lackland."

"That is the family, you may be sure," cried the tittering Miss Carleton, "for he is come here to make his fortune by marrying an heiress." Even Mr. Mahon was silenced for a moment by this unfeeling speech; but his natural kindness made him offer assistance before any one else could speak.

"Poor young man! A very honourable family, though rather poor. I will do all I can for you. I will write to-morrow to Colonel Delville, to speak to Lord B."

"To get him an heiress," sneered Miss Carleton, who felt a spite against him in remembrance of Helen's reproof.

"We must not allow our vanity to induce us to think that

young ladies, rich or poor, are the most desirable things to be attained," said Helen, with a look at Miss Carleton, which silenced her at least for the moment, as that young lady had believed her out of hearing. Then turning to Mr. Mahon, she added, "I fear I have been a heedless hostess, and did not introduce my guest as I should have done. Mr. Elliott is not related to the family you mentioned, but is a ward of Lord Fitzallan's;" and smiling on Mr. Elliott, she continued, "You are not acquainted with Mr. Mahon, or you would understand he is never so happy as when trying to serve others."

Miss Jones's rhapsody had seemed so like a satire on her own taste for border ballads and ancient families, that our heroine had been meditating on it, till a look at Mr. Elliott showed her the martyrdom he was enduring. Sympathy for him, and indignation at Miss Carleton, caused her to interpose; yet she could not but regret the interference had been necessary, and a glance at Mr. De Roos, who stood by in silence, told her opinion on the subject. She had seen Mr. Elliott striving to veil his pain under a proud demeanour; observed his sternness when believing himself the object of intended insult; marked him stand like some noble animal at bay, ready to spring upon his foes; but she was not prepared for the instant change on her appearing as his defender.

As at their first introduction, the pride and the sternness passed away; a flush of shame at having been galled, or of *mauvaise honte*, or of some other feeling, came over his sallow cheek, and he looked painfully confused; then, inspired by her kindness, or roused by a look from De Roos, he recovered his self-command, and to her great surprise acted instantly on what she had scarcely meant for a hint. He thanked Mr. Mahon with warmth for his kind offer, though he declined it; and then turning to Miss Jones, in a manner perfectly good humoured and rather playful, he denied the honour of being related to the last border-reiver, or any on the Scottish side, but offered to amuse her with old border tales at some more fitting time. To Helen's still greater surprise, Mr. De Roos joined in the thanks, though he said Lord Fitzallan had his interest too much at heart to let it slumber; and a word to Alford prevented further mischief.

As she was looking over some music at one end of the room, Mr. De Roos approached.

"Every occurrence of this evening elevates you in the same proportion that it lowers me. You despise me for a want of moral courage in not stepping forward as Elliott's defender;

but I had only joined the group as you so nobly interfered, and dreaded drawing more attention on you ; aware that mean minds, possessing no generous feelings themselves, consider their own cold-blooded prudence the standard of propriety—”

“ And would blame me for extricating a young man and a stranger, from a painful situation, you would insinuate ?” replied Helen warmly ; “ but you may spare yourself the trouble. I shall not shrink from such blame, when better feelings require I should become obnoxious to it.”

“ I certainly am the most unfortunate of beings ! All I say, and all I do, only lower me in the estimation of one whose esteem is valued more than I dare tell. The vexation I was too provoked and too unpractised to conceal, at finding that Mrs. Jones would gossip and Mrs. Carleton sneer, has made you imagine that I thought your noble defence of Elliott uncalled for, when I only intended to express the depth of my gratitude. Then, had I been less frank, less sincere, had I not told you of our ancient enmity, you would not have thought, as I see you now do, that I seek to render Elliott’s defects more glaring, rather than to hide them. I have not the presumption to ask for a milder judgment, on account of the pain one so harsh occasions ; I can but appeal to your kindness and justice, not to decide against me without due consideration, and some positive proof of delinquency. All I ask of you is, to look on my actions without prejudice, and this I know I may demand : you cannot, you will not, be unjust, and make me suffer for my frankness.”

Where is the woman’s heart that could hear such an appeal untouched ?—the incense was so delicate, the whole tone so devoted, and the manner so completely in accordance with the matter. Helen St. Maur was not perfect ; she had the weakness, the besetting sins of human nature, and, though aware of the power of flattery, could not always resist its influence : besides, she feared she might have been unjust, and he was certainly wounded at her suspicions. As is wont to be the case with young people of quick feelings, she was apt to let impulse guide, and almost before he had finished speaking, she was making the *amende honorable*, or rather *aimable*.

“ I am but a wayward being, Mr. De Roos, so you must not heed my fancies. Then I pique myself on my penetration, and in such case one must see more than one’s neighbours ; so, as the whole county rings with your perfections, to gain any celebrity I was perforce compelled to take the other side. I did not think favourably of your conduct

towards Mr. Elliott, but I beg pardon for my misjudgment, and trust you need fear no injustice for the future."

"I can scarcely regret your suspicions, since you own them with such fascinating frankness, and excuse them with such sweetness, as prove they exist no longer; and I flatter myself to find favour in the recoil. My only fear is, lest I should offend again as regards Elliott. Do not be shocked, when I own the difficulty of conquering my boyish dislike; and do not wrong me, by thinking that dislike shall do him harm."

"The feelings of youth are not easily conquered; but his dependence on your family will render the task more easy."

"That idea has already been most powerful, and were I not condemned to hourly annoyance from his *gaucheries*, I think it would soon be conquered. But you shall see how heroically I can behave with the hope of your approbation for my guerdon, and now let me assist you in your search."

They looked over song after song, seeking for one Miss Carleton particularly desired, whilst his animated remarks caused Helen to forget how long the search had continued.

"I hope I don't intrude!" said Miss Carleton, approaching with a spiteful air. "The people are all wondering what you are both about."

"If the people, as you call them, really expressed wonder, you might have informed them I was looking after the song you insisted on having," replied Helen, in a tone which checked further impertinence. "This is the eighth book I have looked over, and as only this one remains, in which it can be, you had better look over it yourself;" and putting the book into her hands, she left her with Mr. De Roos.

"I begged her not to disturb you," said Mrs. Jones, interrupting her passage, and trying to look very mysterious. "You looked so happy *taty-taty*, as Susy called it; but she would go. I am sure Mr. De Roos is a very happy man, but I always thought Hurlestone would soon have a master."

"I am not aware there is any chance of Hurlestone's having a master, and I must beg you will not again endeavour to prevent my being joined by any of my guests. Had Miss Carleton come sooner, she could have assisted me in my search;" and Helen passed on, leaving Mrs. Jones "all of a doubt," as she said.

Miss Carleton seemed to find the seeking corner still more delightful than had our heroine, and contrived to detain her companion till late in the evening.

"Do not you sing, Mr. Elliot?" enquired Helen, after some previous discourse on music.

"Not here!" he replied, smiling.

"Where then?"

"Only amid my own wild wastes."

"Nay, but you must grant me one song, I claim it as host-ess!"

"Then I must throw myself on your good nature for excuse, as a compliance would only subject me to ridicule. The only lady who has hitherto been kind enough to accompany me, was more inclined than qualified to instruct, and you forget I am quite a savage from the north."

She fancied there was a hidden meaning in his last words; but not understanding to what he could allude, she only answered gaily:

"You gave me so little cause to remember, I had indeed forgotten it; and after throwing yourself on my good nature, I suppose I must press you no more."

"What if, grown presumptuous from the success of my first appeal, I were to petition for 'Auld Robin Gray'?"

"Then I would say, 'Jockey of Norfolk be not too bold.' It would be little short of profanation to sing it in such a company," and she glanced round the room, "at some more fitting time you may claim it."

"I shall not forget the promise, believe me! Will you let the pledge be some other song of your own selecting?"

"I seldom sing in large parties, particularly in my own house; but, being a stranger, your request shall be granted," and she immediately sang one of Alford's choosing.

Mr. Elliott merely thanked her, without saying one word of praise, and she resigned her seat to Miss Jones, who sentimentalised "Jock o' Hasledean."

"Do you know, Miss St. Maur, I am selfish enough to hope you will sing no more this evening. I was not before aware of the power of sweet sounds to rouse feelings almost to madness," he sighed, then added more gaily, "and your singing is wasted here."

"You learn flattery in the North as well as in the South, I find; but I agree with you, that music is for the happy, and to soothe slight or imaginary ills. It may enliven melancholy, but it brings more poignant pangs to sorrow: the breaking heart revels not in the luxury of agony."

Mrs. Hargrave called her away at the moment, and Mr. Elliott joined a group who were looking over some drawings.

"This is quite perfection!" said Miss Mahon, holding up a very beautiful landscape in body colour.

All were loud in its praise, and Mr. De Roos in particular dwelt much on its beauty.

At length it was handed to Mr. Elliott, who looked at it attentively without speaking.

"That is perfect, is it not, Elliott?" inquired De Roos.

"The design is beautiful, and the execution good; but 'perfect' is a strong word."

"Why, what cold and cautious praise you douce Northerners bestow. Thanks to my lucky stars, though of Northern descent, I was born in the warmer regions of the south. Come! come! play Southron for once, and own the drawing is perfect."

"We leave flattery to you Southrons; leave us Northerners sincerity;" and there was point in his tone. "The drawing, though beautiful in many respects, is not perfect. There is a fault in the perspective of that arch, and the shadow of the tower is incorrect."

"You are too critical for me," replied Mr. De Roos, whilst Miss Mahon said, "Hush!" glancing towards Helen, who had joined the group unperceived by the criticiser, but not, as she thought, unperceived by the praiser.

"I beg your pardon, Miss St. Maur," said the critic, guessing at the cause of the 'hush,' "I was not aware the drawing was your's."

"I hope, if you had been, you would not have said less, for it is so seldom I can get any one to point out my faults, that your criticism has the charm of novelty as well as truth; only you must pay this penalty for your sincerity,—to teach me how to amend the errors."

"Willingly, if in my power; but you must allow me first to express my admiration of the other parts of your drawing. Called on so peremptorily for my praise, I fear it was rather churlishly bestowed."

"Oh, no! we will imagine all those pretty things said already!"

To her great surprise, he was not only able to convince her and others of the faults, but to shew her how to correct them; and she gathered enough from his conversation, to be convinced he was no despicable artist, whilst there was such an absence of pretension in all he said, that even the most prejudiced were pleased with his modesty. He accounted for his knowledge, by saying that an artist of great eminence had

spent a summer in the north, and, in return for his acting as guide, had taken great pains to render him a proficient.

The conversation soon turned on foreign countries, and Mr. De Roos charmed all with his animated and entertaining anecdotes of painters and paintings.

"Miss St. Maur," said Mrs. Carleton, after whispering to her daughter, unheard, as she vainly thought, by Helen, "her carriage will be convenient," "as Mrs. Hargrave will not attend Mrs. Throgmorton's ball, I shall be very happy to become your chaperon, and you had better dine and sleep with us. Some people say there is no occasion for a chaperon at a private dance, but I say no prudent mother will sanction such an idea."

"Thank you; but as I dine and sleep at Mrs. Throgmorton's, I shall require no chaperon."

"Oh! just as you please! but I thought I might be of some use to you, though I dare say you prefer Mrs. Throgmorton;" and she drew herself up in her usual style when offended, with or without a cause.

"I assure you I estimate your offer as it deserves."

The lady retired with a stately step, followed, after a due number of coquettish airs, by her daughter, handed, or rather armed by Mr. De Roos, who, willingly or unwillingly, was obliged to perform the office.

"Miss St. Maur," he said, on his return, "I have some Italian prints which I am sure would please you. When I pay my visit of etiquette to-morrow, to introduce Elliott in due form, you must allow me to bring them."

"Not only allow, but render you many thanks, as I have a passion for the art!"

"What! are you and De Roos owning a talent for the art of designing?" inquired Alford.

"No!" she replied with an arch smile, "Mr. De Roos positively denies all talent in that way."

"He is only modest; do not believe him."

"Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" assuming a doubtful air.

"I trust the cause to your penetration," replied Mr. De Roos, with a graceful bow and imploring look.

"My 'vanity' you mean, since to that you appeal. Take care you have not prudence and all the moralities against you."

"I assure you, I have heard De Roos praised for designing and drawing," continued Alford.

"Designing to escape from mischief-makers, and drawing inferences and conclusions," rejoined the laughing De Roos, wishing Helen good night, and then making his adieux to the rest of the company.

"There are some things, Miss St. Maur," said Elliott, "that can be felt, but never told; and the heart which dictates acts of kindness can alone appreciate the gratitude they excite. I entered your drawing-room with some thoughts of turning misanthrope; I leave it with feelings of love for all around me. The last few hours have been to me more than years of my past life; things in them have come across my mind, like some witching song heard in earlier years, bringing back the fairy dreams and bright hopes of childhood, not to awaken regret, but to rouse to action. The gloom of despair has fled before your smile, and it only remains to prove worthy of your interest. Good night!"

Before she could recover from her surprise, he had left the room.

"What was your *protégé* saying to his champion?" asked Alford; "a little while since, and his face was as dull as a November fog, and just now it was absolutely clear, bright, dazzling sunshine—a very dog-day in warmth and brilliancy—whilst you stood ready to enact an April morn, all shine and showers. I verily believe Mrs. Carleton was right; and that this northern stranger is Michael Scott himself, who has thrown his glamour o'er you."

"If you will invent, let your inventions have a little more of probability. If you were to mention Michael Scott to Mrs. Carleton, she would ask if he were any relation to Thomas Scott, who keeps the 'Cat and Fiddle,' on the road."

"Why, now you are too hard upon the pompous lady! She would only confound Michael Scott and Walter Scott; and wiser heads might be puzzled to decide which was the greater magician."

"But, joking apart now, this I heard: 'Nonsense about a quiet, shy young man, and a good-natured hostess. My daughter Harriet says he is not at all shy, but an ugly, awkward bear, who looks sometimes as if he would eat up Mr. De Roos, who is so kind to him; and I say it is not decorous in a young lady to make a fuss about a stranger. I call her his champion!'"

"Am I to believe this?"

"Indeed you may. You must promise me never to ask her again."

"I should rather blame you for repeating what was never intended for my ears. I am much vexed, for, till she can get a new tale, she will be sure to repeat this to every one she sees, and the *soubriquets* of champion and *protégé*, will become the general talk, whilst the size and figure of my supposed pet will render the story too good to be soon forgotten."

"I never thought of that!" and he burst into a loud laugh at the idea. "We shall have some new caricatures on the old story of the mouse and the lion. But what will you do?"

"Just as I should have done before. I am not to be daunted by a sneer or a laugh, though I may be annoyed; and you must aid and serve me by being marked in your attentions."

"I knew that would be your decision; nor is it rash, for, in his case, no one can suspect you of a warmer feeling than pity. I would try to frighten Mrs. Carleton into silence, did I not fear it would be with as little success as attended De Roos, when he tried to persuade her daughter not to publish his friend's *gau-cheries* and dependence."

"Did he do that?"

"Yes, but with a want of tact I did not expect from him."

"Rather with a want of will, I suspect; and it is this suspicion of unfair play, which makes me urge you to befriend this stranger."

"And to do the same yourself?"

"Why, my pretty playfellow! you should have lived in the days of knight-errantry, and been the bride of Sir Launcelot. Your heart is too warm for these cold times. But vex not at spite or gossip; and I will tame and protect this poor bear: and, never fear De Roos, I doubt his power still more than his will to harm."

"You will never rate him as he should be rated."

"*Nous verrons*, as you said before; and now farewell, for Mrs. Hargrave is yawning, and I am

'The last guest of Hurlestone,
Left talking alone.'

CHAPTER XV.

'Tis not the note of gathering shell,
 Of fairy horn, nor silver bell,
 No, 'tis the lute's mellifluous swell,
 Mixed with a maiden's voice so clear,
 The flitting bats flock round to hear!
 So wildly through the vault it rung.
 That song, if in the green wood sung,
 Would draw the fays of wood and plain
 To kiss the lips that poured the strain.
 The lofty pine would listening lean;
 The wild birch wave her tresses green;
 And larks, that rose the dawn to greet,
 Drop lifeless at the singer's feet.

Hogg.

WHEN Mr. De Roos, accompanied by Mr. Elliott, brought over the Italian prints the next morning, they were shown into Helen's own room, where she sat surrounded by books and curiosities, in order and out of order. She was engaged in copying the drawing which had been criticised the night before, and had just finished a sketch, with its faults amended as Mr. Elliott had pointed out. She appealed to him concerning a slight alteration; then putting it aside, turned her attention to the prints, whose beauty had by no means been overrated. Their owner seemed in his element whilst showing them, or relating the tales attached to each; and so delighted were his auditors that time passed by unperceived, and it would have been difficult to decide who was the most gratified of the three; certainly Helen was not the least so. The last leaf was turning as the door opened, and Lady Catherine Alford entered unannounced. All were so deeply engaged that her presence was unremarked.

"Am I the possessor of the magic belt, that makes its wearer invisible? If it had been a *tête-à-tête*, I should have slipped out again on tiptoe, but a trio cannot be disturbed." Then putting up her glass: "Showing off—wild beasts, I conclude!" she added, glancing at Elliott, who looked at her in surprise.

"Wrong, Catherine! rather a dissertation on the polite arts, which I am sorry you have lost. With Mr. De Roos you are already acquainted, allow me to introduce his friend and visitor. Lady Catherine Alford, Mr. Elliott."

An observer must have thought the lady's bow as slight

and cold as bow could be, had not the gentleman's surpassed it in both respects, and that without his appearing in the slightest degree hurt or offended.

"Did Alford accompany you?" asked Helen.

"No; but don't pout about it, for he is to join me shortly. Really you and Alford are inseparable. I have no advantage of his services as a brother, and he is so much more at Hurlestone than at Marston, that I am quite sure, were any of his horses turned loose, they would come over here of their own accord. I fully expect to salute you as sister one of these days."

"But soon the rival sisters flew
From kissing to disputing,"

exclaimed Alford, who entered at the moment, and was by no means pleased with Catherine's burst of ill-humour: "Miss St. Maur would never deign to ally herself to such a crack brain as I, or such a severe wit as you, or she might be Lady Alford to-morrow."

"*L'amour commence par l'amour, et l'on ne sauroit passer de la plus forte amitié qu'à un amour foible*, or I might take you at your word," said Helen, smiling, "but Catherine knows she will never laugh us out of our regard. So welcome to Hurlestone, and your sister must not be jealous if you play brother to us both."

All this was said so kindly, that even Catherine could not resist it, and answered in a more friendly tone:

"I am tired of trying to quarrel with you, Helen, you are so stupidly good-tempered; and as to quarrelling with Alford, that is still more hopeless, as he never thinks long enough on any one subject to allow it to be accomplished; so I suppose I must submit to the monotony of harmony at present;" and she turned and entered into an encounter of wits with Mr. De Roos, who was no mean antagonist; whilst the other three failed not to do their parts in "astounding silence."

"I am to be sure to take home to my lady mother an account of your flower garden; so come and show all about it," said Catherine, as she rose from her seat in the dining-room, whither they had adjourned for refreshments.

As they passed one of the windows, Helen perceived a horse, bridled and saddled, feeding in the park with no one near him.

"Whose horse can that be?" she said. "I fear some accident must have happened."

"Do not be alarmed: it is mine," replied Elliott.

"Yours! How could the servants be so careless! Do ring the bell, Alford."

"Pardon me, it was at my desire. He is a great pet, and I often indulge him thus."

"Will he allow himself to be caught easily?"

The only answer was a low musical whistle, which the noble animal no sooner heard than he galloped towards them, tossing his long mane and making innumerable caracoles, with all the wild graces of an untamed colt.

"I quite envy you the possession of such a beautiful creature," said Helen, as the graceful animal received with evident pleasure the caresses of his master.

"No flattery can be too gross to please, when applied to my favourite," said he, looking on her with an admiring and delighted gaze, as she took part in caressing him. "Bavieca and I have been friends almost from the hour he was born; and no knight of former days valued his steed more highly than I do mine."

"Bavieca! then you are an admirer of the Cid! For the memory of his namesake and noble master, he must share our hospitality;" and she fed him with bread and apples, rather at first to the discomfiture of Bran, who looked some jealousy on this fancied rival, till Elliott supplied him with his full share of the bounty.

"You had better send the gardener with us, Helen, said Catherine, impatiently shrugging her shoulders in concert with Mr. De Roos; "if once you take to feeding animals, and talking over the Cid, you are about as agreeable company as one of his own gentle sons-in-law."

"I fear I am the culprit," remarked Elliott, "but I could not resist having my favourite admired;" then giving his horse a farewell pat, and waving his hand, the animal neighed, and with the same wild grace returned to his pasture, whilst Bran, obeying a motion from his mistress, went round the house, and joined her as she entered the garden.

Lady Catherine Alford, as has already been seen, neither piqued herself on possessing a good temper, or on concealing a bad one; still less did she ever trouble herself to veil her likes or dislikes; *et par conséquence*, her unqualified rudeness to Elliott, and her courtesy to De Roos, showed plainly the estimation in which she held them.

"What have you done to vex Catherine this morning?" asked Helen of Alford, as they stood a little apart.

"You may well ask. I only wonder how you and Elliott

can bear her insolence as you do ; his perfect indifference to it, or rather cool contempt, surprises me, and I think has amazed her. I can only account for her ill-humour, as angry because I praised Dormer this morning, and said you only were worthy of him ; and you know she detests him. I doubt if she has forgiven your baffling her questions so skilfully."

After some time passed in walking about and conversing with Mr. De Roos, for she left to her brother the task of learning all her mother wished to hear, Catherine returned to the house, and as she passed through the billiard room challenged De Roos, by whom of course the challenge was instantly accepted.

"May I petition, then, for 'Auld Robin Gray,'" pleaded Elliott ; "I may not be long in the neighbourhood."

"What ! after our discussion on music last night. Is life so very bright that we should court gloom?"

"Not as a point of morality or matter of fact, but as a poetic fancy I may claim indulgence. You know the poet says—

"There's such a charm in melancholy,
I would not, if I could, be gay."

"Think you the poet had ever known what real sorrow was ? Grief and melancholy are as an ocean to a river ; but it would be well to instill some of these romantic notions into the country squires, who think of nothing but the material of life ; and how they can best eat, drink, hunt, and shoot, through two thousand a-year ; yet I doubt, if such feelings be too much indulged, whether they may not lead to indolent despondency, rather than cheerful action."

"Do you avow yourself, then, an enemy to romance and enthusiasm?"

"*Point du tout !* rather a suffering ally. I would but plead for both being under the guidance of judgment. In one of my wild moods, whilst listening to the avaricious and the cold, I am charged with having exclaimed with De Stael : '*Oh, que j'aime l'inutile !*'"

"And you deny the charge?"

"No ; I play Mungo : 'Me say noting.'"

"And yet you warn me against enthusiasm!"

"I spoke as another, rather than myself, and there is this difference—woman may dream, but man must do."

"There is some difference, I allow ; but may man never dream ? Must he tread the weary road of life, with the same

measured heavy step as the dull beast making his circuit in the mill ; intent only on the present, without a thought of the future to brighten the toil, and prove him other than a piece of mechanism ? What genius ever won his way to fame, but he gained the ridicule of the cold and the foolish, as an enthusiast ?”

“None ! none !” she said, as she looked upon him in surprise. The sallow hue of the thin cheek had given place to the vivid glow of excitement, and his eyes flashed like torches gleaming through the midnight gloom. She almost doubted if it could be the same person she had pitied the night before for his *mauvaise honte* and desolation. Could such a being require pity and attention ? Was he not rather qualified to brave every danger, and brunt every difficulty ? He marked her look with surprise, and answered it.

“You deemed me the cold and cautious northern that De Roos called me. Can the deep river chafe and murmur like the shallow stream ? If it show not a golden sand, if it nourish not the primrose and the violet, it can bear on its bosom the images of loftier things ; the gigantic rock, or the majestic forest : but we met only yesterday, and I would not speak of myself. What wonder if others do not understand me, since I cannot comprehend my own heart.” He paused for a moment, and then resumed in a tone almost as playful as her own—“Who can be warned against the dangers of enthusiasm by an enthusiast : as well might a Byron deprecate the gift of poesy ; an Alexander, in the blaze of his glory, convince of the vanity of heroism ; but to judge from the little I know of the world, neither romance or enthusiasm are very prevalent disorders.”

“Why no, neither cordons nor quarantines are necessary for their restriction. But some author has said, ‘Enthusiasm leads to meditation ; character to action ; and, to form anything like perfection, they should be united. Now, though I am not quite sure I understand the word ‘character,’ yet, as the most mystical things are the most admired, I am inclined to think the saying very sublime.”

“Perhaps it is correct, if not sublime. A short time since, and I thought that the enthusiasm which dreamt of noble deeds, would ensure their performance ; but I have learnt from experience, painful enough to be remembered, that the hero of a solitude may be little less than a coward in society. But a look—a word may change—has changed—every feeling : given strength to weakness—energy to action—and I

yet hope to bear ridicule and insult as a hero should. But we have wandered strangely from the subject," he added abruptly ; "and the text of 'Auld Robin Gray,' has furnished a long commentary. I am still inclined to prefer my request ?"

" 'Twas throwing words away, for still
The little child would have his will ! "

repeated our heroine, with a tone and manner worthy even that most exquisite piece of simplicity.

"Whither bound ?" inquired Alford.

"To the drawing-room, to sing 'Auld Robin Gray : ' and if you can forget your unsentimental habit, of laughing at all melancholy things, you can come and play audience."

"I will forget any thing to please you ;" leading her off with mock gallantry. "Not that I ought to pardon your impertinence. You cannot imagine the pretty pieces of sentiment I poured forth to Miss Jones yesterday evening, amid the umbrageous branches of the mighty monarchs of the forest. Long as Miss Carleton lingered with her *devoué*, I lingered still longer, though, an arrant cheat, she refused to pay me. By the way, Elliott, what think you of Miss Jones ? Some people may call her ridiculous and sentimental, but I say she is one of the most entertaining personages I know ;" and he mimicked Mrs. Carleton's queen-like hauteur to perfection.

"You may as well laugh out at once, Helen, for I am very good not to play the mimick oftener."

"So it is ; we pique ourselves on not being worse, instead of deploring our being so bad. Miss Jones has many good qualities, and you should blush to encourage her in making herself ridiculous."

"Why, without her sentiment and enthusiasm, she would be but a common-place sort of person, or a tiresome gossip like her mother."

"No ridicule on enthusiasts, if you please ; for Mr. Elliott and I have enrolled ourselves among the number, and allow Miss Jones only the affectation, not the reality."

"A very agreeable belief to buoy up your ideas of superiority. I have half a mind to enter the lists as her champion. But did you not admire her eloquent border reminiscences, Elliott ?"

"To tell you the truth," he replied, half laughing half con-

fused, and glancing at Helen : "I was too much annoyed, and too much ashamed at having been annoyed, to be a fair judge of her eloquence ; and I am the more prejudiced against her, as I fear my conduct gained contempt where I am most desirous to win esteem."

There was a frankness in this avowal which won both his auditors.

"No such thing !" answered Alford hastily ; "her folly, and Miss Carleton's impertinence, were sufficient excuse ; but I am ashamed to own I was the author of the mischief, though not aware of its extent. I must coax Helen to plead for my pardon."

"Your kindness since, leaves me nothing to pardon, but I must not so easily acquit myself ; mere animal courage can bear no comparison with moral, and I feel I have cause to blush for my cowardice."

"Leave blushing to others," said our heroine kindly, "they only had occasion for it ; what you call moral courage is often nothing more than habit."

"Now for the song," cried Alford ; "and I will play sentimental on this couch, whilst Elliott shall, novel-like, hang enchanted over your harp."

"I think my gaunt figure and grim face would look less awkward on the couch ; but as no painter or novelist is near, it shall be as you will."

Fortunately the harp had been tuned in the morning, so the song was commenced without delay. I say, 'fortunately,' because I have a great objection to the tuning of instruments ; it is like a prosing introduction to a spirited work—a wearying prologue to a noble action—a something that spoils all the romance, all the witchery of sweet sounds, making them seem of earth, rather "than of high heaven." The song was sung without quavers or foreign ornaments, but just as Jeannie herself might have sung it ; and as the syren, at its conclusion, looked up through her tears, she read in the countenance of the listener a deep homage to her powers ; but the moment he saw he was observed he turned to the window, whilst even Alford affected to be busy with a book.

The harp was mute for some moments, when, feeling the silence painful, she struck a few chords with a trembling hand ; then with a more decided touch, till they swelled into a full rich harmony of martial music ; and then sank again into a sweet and tender strain, as if a hymn for the departed brave.

“ ‘ Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony,
A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying
With the blest which made me.’ ”

She started at his deep though low voice, and looked up in his face in surprise, whilst her slender fingers yet lingered among the vibrating strings; for she had not been aware that he had again taken his station beside her, and there was that in the melancholy of his glance that won her pity.

“ I hope that is not a very heathenish wish,” she said, striving to smile away his pain; “ for sometimes when *enivrée de la musique*, I too have breathed those same beautiful words.”

“ And I,” echoed Alford, whose sentimental fits were rare and evanescent,—

——— “ ‘ Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a hothouse pine,
A living sweet—a juicy delicacy—
An epicure’s enjoyment—born and dying
With the tan-pit which reared me.’ ”

“ A fit epilogue to ‘ Auld Robin Gray,’ ” said Helen, laughing at the pomp of his recitation.

“ After this we had better seek the billiard players.”

As she approached the door she heard the lady say, “ Oh, I understand perfectly; a poor dependant—a hanger on—a person who fastens himself on you, to try what he can get—a leech, for which one is obliged to provide to prevent oneself from being sucked to death. I pity you !” and a laugh, as of more than one person, sounded through the apartment. There could be but little difficulty in guessing for whom this was meant, and the countenance of one showed that he understood the allusion. There was a flushing of the cheek, and now and then a deathlike paleness, a fierceness of the eye, a compression of the lips, as though in fear that words should force their way despite the will; a sudden and haughty movement in advance; a struggle, as if the memory that woman’s lips had breathed these words, or that fiery passions were not made for man, was holding a combat with his heart’s deep agony, and then all was comparatively calm again. But the indignant curling of the lip, the concentrated look, and the half-clenched hand, showed “ what the storm had been.” Helen’s eyes had been turned upon him at the commencement of the speech, and had never been withdrawn; first, from a wish to appear unconscious of its direction, and then, unknown

to herself, from the change his features showed : but as the struggle ceased, and she became aware she had been watching him, they were bent on the ground in confusion and sorrow. He felt he had her sympathy ; but, at such a moment, even that conviction had much of bitterness. He was silent for some moments, and then said, in a tone whose very clearness told of the control exercised over it, " It is false ! I have a claim, and will owe nothing to their bounty ; " then passing on, he entered the room with a proud step and a lofty mien that imparted, for the time, a portion of dignity to his gaunt figure.

His entrance caused the billiard-players to look up, and his altered deportment enchained their observation. He looked round, saw which patronized the white, glanced at the index, marked the state of the game, and then said, " Hitherto you have been successful, De Roos, but a change of fortune may come ; " and without waiting for an answer he walked out into the lawn, and employed himself in caressing Bran.

There was nothing particular in the words, and the tone was only remarkable for its extraordinary calmness, yet their impression on the hearers was deep and strange. If Helen saw aright, Mr. De Roos turned white, and then red ; Lady Catherine's balls ran *à queu* ; cannons were unknown ; and the remainder of the game was too wild for any to form an estimate of the merits of the players. Those words had left a gloom both strove in vain to conquer ; the lady's pride was wounded, that a nameless stranger should have dared thus to look on her, and that his look could thus have moved her ; and the gentleman might have a deeper cause for his feeling, whatever that feeling might be.

The table was, by mutual consent, deserted, and at Catherine's request the horses were ordered. As she stepped out on the lawn, followed by Mr. De Roos, a look of surprise was exchanged between them, to find Elliott talking with open gaiety to our heroine and Alford, and at intervals engaged at high romps with Bran.

" I shall certainly be jealous of you, Elliott," said Alford. " I pique myself on holding the second place in Bran's affections ; but you seem such a prodigious favourite, I tremble for my station. Come here, you fright ! " The dog came, licked his hands, and then bounded away, playing a hundred gambols, and alternately caressing his mistress and his other two friends.

" Bran ! Bran ! " called Mr. De Roos, " you must include me amongst your favourites."

The animal would have obeyed the call, but a sly motion from Alford retained him; who, bursting into a loud laugh, exclaimed, "Your chance is gone, De Roos; Helen holds her's a dog of such penetration, that she always yields her judgment to his."

The person addressed looked disconcerted, though he tried to laugh it off; but Helen detected a scowling look, only half repressed—as if the power to conceal was, for once, less than the inclination. "How can you make such a fool of the dog, and of yourself too?" said Catherine, pettishly, attempting to strike Bran with her whip.

"Confine your rebukes to the tongue," said Helen, intercepting the stroke. "You have forgotten your promise of civility."

"*Ou as you are, I did not then reckon on the contingency of your encouraging bears;" and the polite young lady looked pointedly at Mr. Elliott, but the look was met by one so cool and contemptuous that she turned away, and wishing Helen a hurried good morning, took the arm of De Roos and walked towards the horses. After placing the lady in her seat, he thanked our heroine for listening to his dull account of the prints, which he begged her to retain at her pleasure, and took his leave, regretting that Lady Catherine had claimed his attendance. A whistle brought Bavioca to his master's side, who, in his mounting and style of riding, showed himself worthy such a noble steed. Mr. De Roos himself did not mount with more ease, hold a more steady seat, or guide with a lighter, firmer reign.*

"I would give something to overhear the conversation between Elliott and De Roos, when they leave us," said Alford, as he stooped to adjust his stirrup.

"You would be disappointed," replied Elliott, who had heard the remark. "We rarely speak when alone, but from necessity, or"—he stopped abruptly, then bowing to Helen rode off.

"He is unfortunate," said Helen, in answer to Alford's inquiring look. "Can you not learn his wishes, and promise interest. I will ensure you that of my family."

"You are a dear kind-hearted thing, and it shall be done. I only wish I had a brother worthy of you. Make my regrets for Mrs. Hargrave's headache; I play the pretty to her for your sake. And now farewell, once more." He touched his horse with the spur, and was soon riding by Elliott's side.

She lingered a few moments, musing on the different and uncommon characters which composed the *parti quarré*, and then entered the house.

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END OF VOL. I.





